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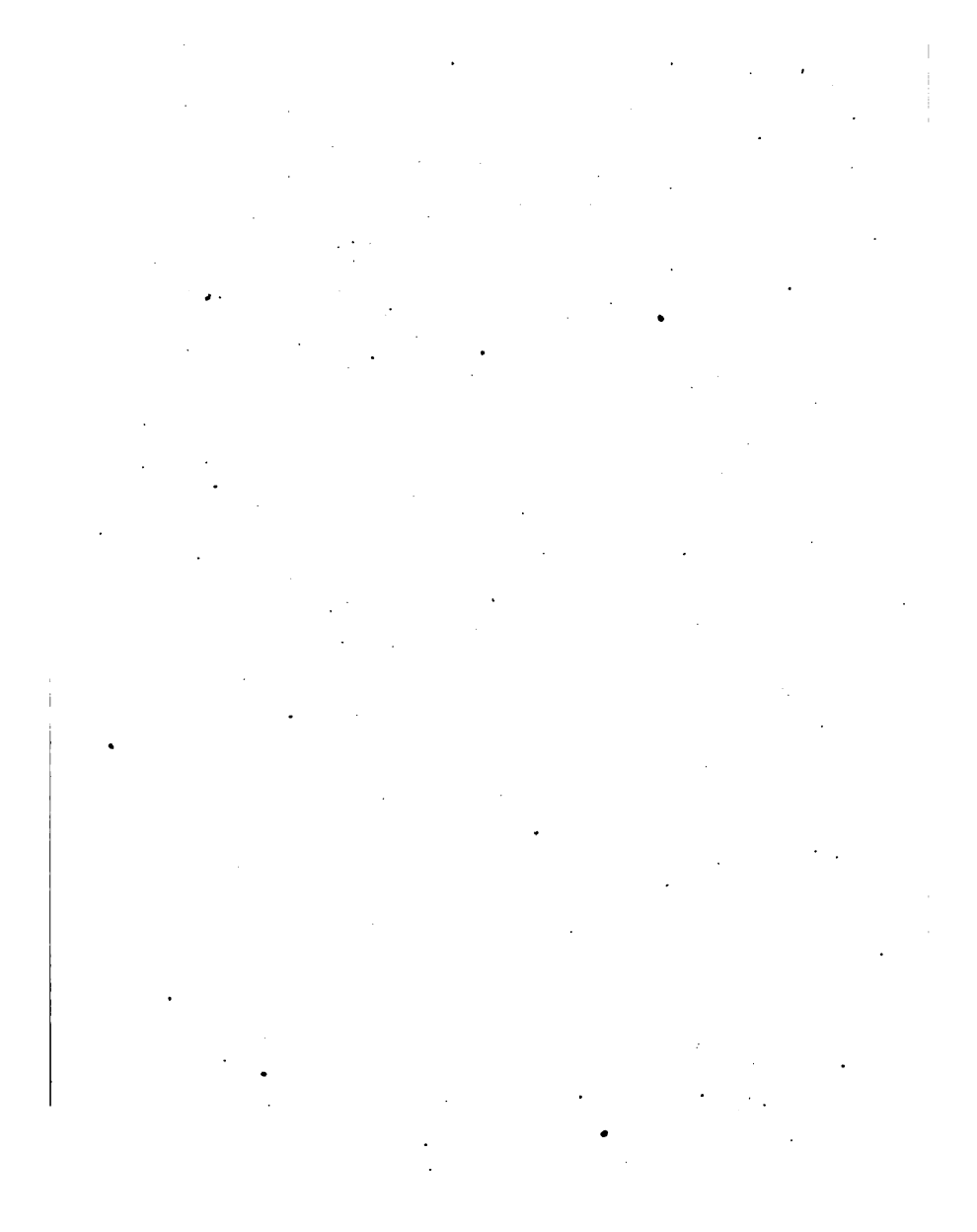
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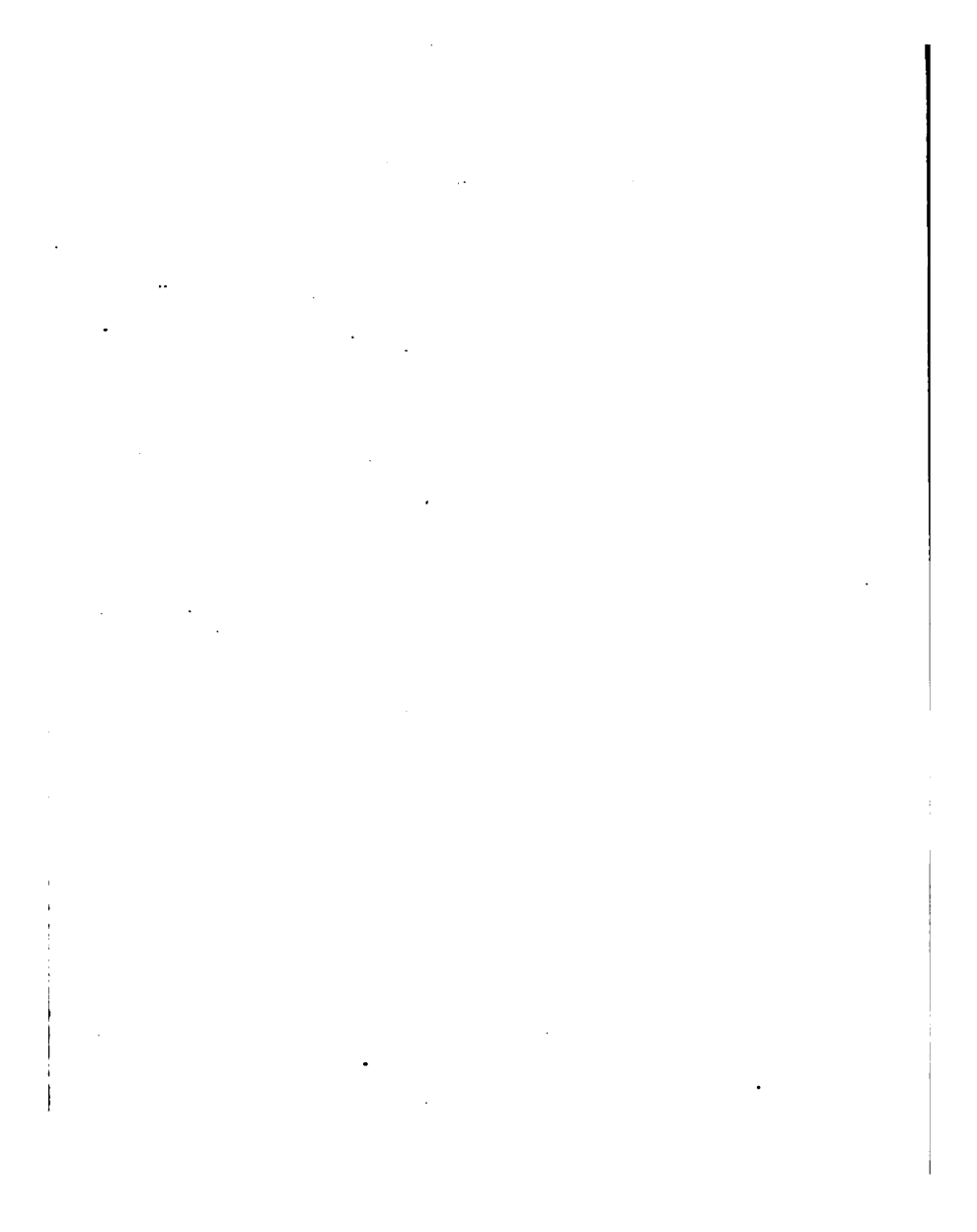
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A HISTORY  
OF  
GOD'S CHURCH OF OLD.

**PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY  
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A HISTORY  
OF  
GOD'S CHURCH OF OLD.  
*FOR CHILDREN*

BY  
MRS RICHARD R. ARMSTRONG,  
AUTHOR OF "A HISTORY OF OUR LORD'S LIFE ON EARTH."

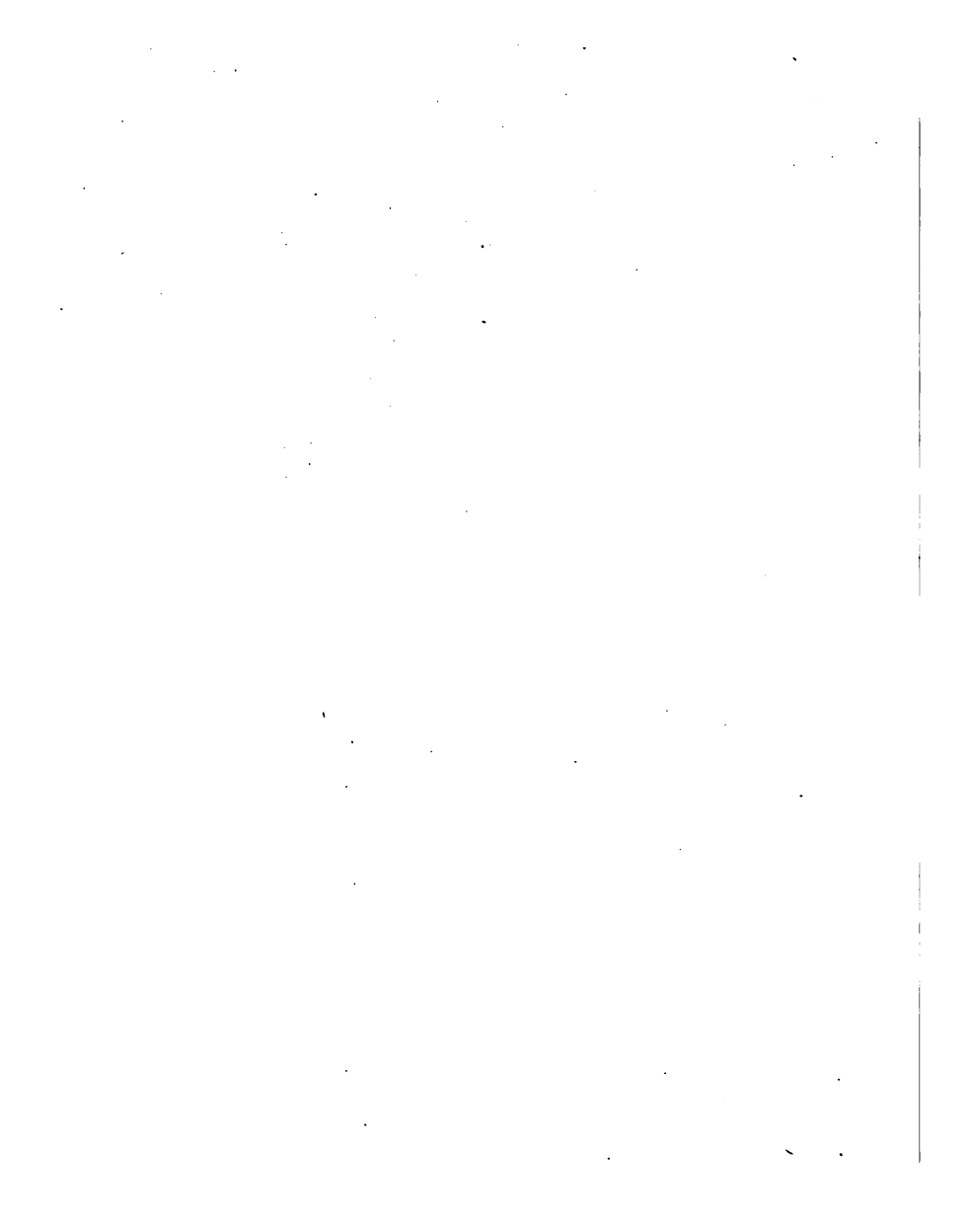


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1872.

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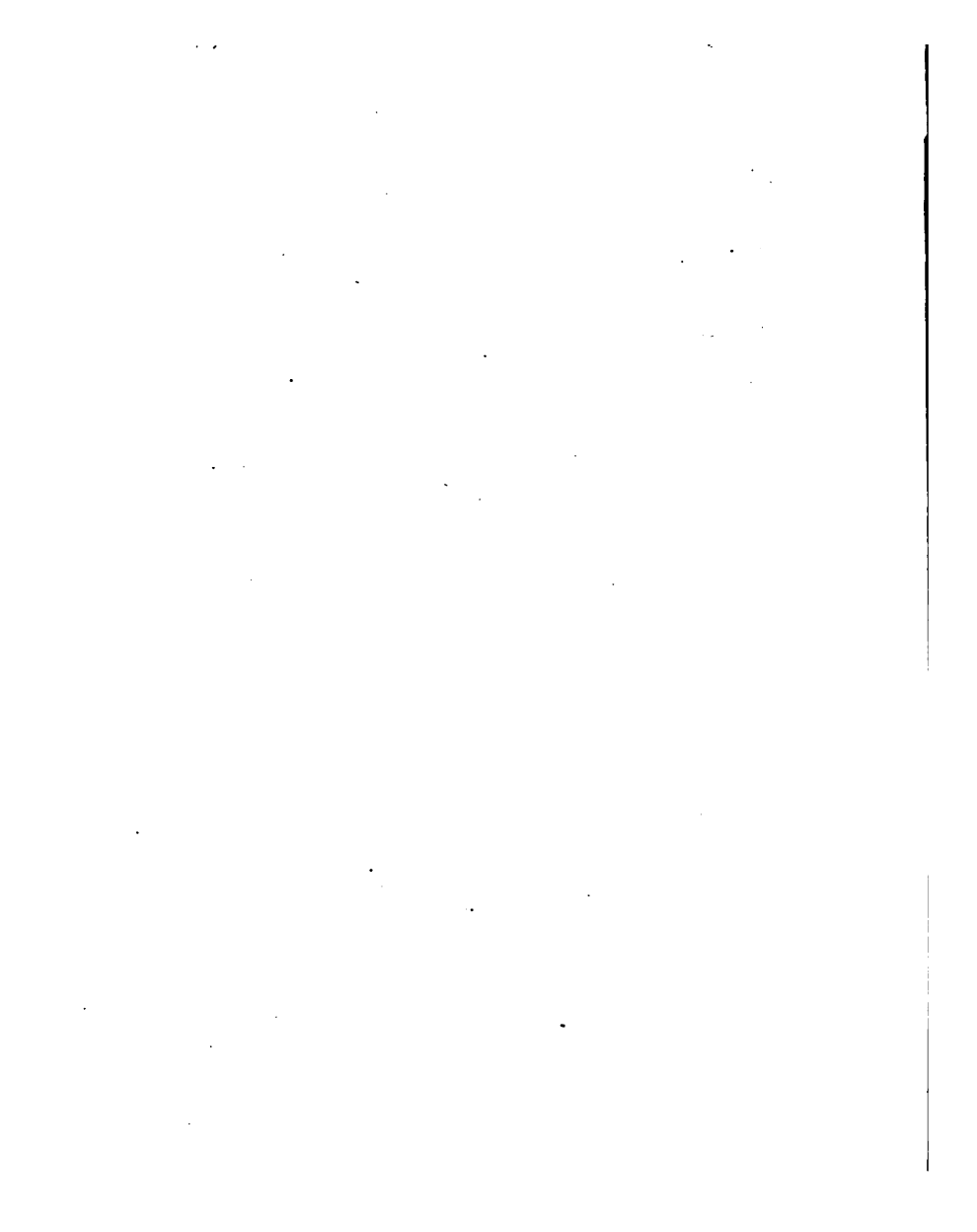
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# **PART I.**



**FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD**  
**TO**  
**THE DEDICATION OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.**



## INTRODUCTION.

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LIKE the "History of our Lord's Life on Earth," this little book was commenced in New Zealand, and was written for the author's own children, not for publication.

"Our Lord's Life on Earth" has, however, met with so good a reception, and seems to have been of so much use, that the author has ventured to put forth the following, trusting that it, too, may be of some help in bringing the *one* vital lesson home to the hearts of children.

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION,  
CANTERBURY, 1872.



# CONTENTS.



	PAGE
The Garden of Eden. Gen. i. ii. . . . .	1
Sin and Death. Gen. iii. iv. . . . .	3
The Flood. Gen. vi. vii. viii. . . . .	5
Noah's Sacrifice and Covenant. Gen. viii. ix. . . . .	6
Confusion. Gen. xi. . . . .	8
The Dispersion. Gen. xi. . . . .	9
The Call of Abraham. Gen. xii. xiii. xiv. . . . .	10
The Birth of Ishmael. Gen. xvi. xvii. xviii. . . . .	12
The Destruction of the Cities of the Plain. Gen. xix. . . . .	14
The Birth of Isaac. Gen. xxi. . . . .	16
The Sacrifice of Isaac. Gen. xxii. . . . .	18
Isaac's Marriage. Gen. xxiv. . . . .	20
Esau and Jacob. The Birthright and the Blessing. Gen. xxv. xxvii. . . . .	23

	PAGE
Jacob's Dream. Gen. xxviii. . . . .	27
Jacob in Mesopotamia. Gen. xxix. xxx. xxxi. xxxii. xxxiii. xxxv. .	29
Joseph and his Brethren. Gen. xxxvii. . . . .	32
Joseph in Egypt. Gen. xxxix. xl. . . . .	35
Pharaoh's Dream. Gen. xli. . . . .	39
The Famine. Gen. xli. xlii. . . . .	41
The Theft. Gen. xliii. xliv. . . . .	44
The Lost Found. Gen. xlv. xlv. . . . .	48
The Death of Jacob. Gen. xlvii. xlviii. xlix. l. . . . .	51
The Story of Job. Job . . . . .	53
The Birth of Moses. Exod. i. ii. . . . .	58
The Name of God. Exod. ii. iii. iv. . . . .	60
The First Plagues. Exod. v. vi. vii. viii. . . . .	64
The Plagues. Exod. viii. ix. x. . . . .	68
The Lord's Passover. Exod. xi. xii. xiii. . . . .	73
The Red Sea. Exod. xiv. . . . .	76
The Song of Moses. Angels' Food. Exod. xv. xvi. . . . .	79
The Smitten Rock. Exod. xvii. xviii. . . . .	82
The Law. Exod. xx. . . . .	83
The Tabernacle. Exod. xxiv. xxv. xxvi. xxvii. . . . .	86
The Golden Calf. Exod. xxviii. xxix. xxx. xxxi. xxxii. xxxiii. . .	89
The Visible Presence. Exod. xxxiii. xxxiv. xxxv. xl. ; Lev. ix. x. .	92
The Numbering. Num. i. ii. iii. . . . .	95



# CONTENTS.

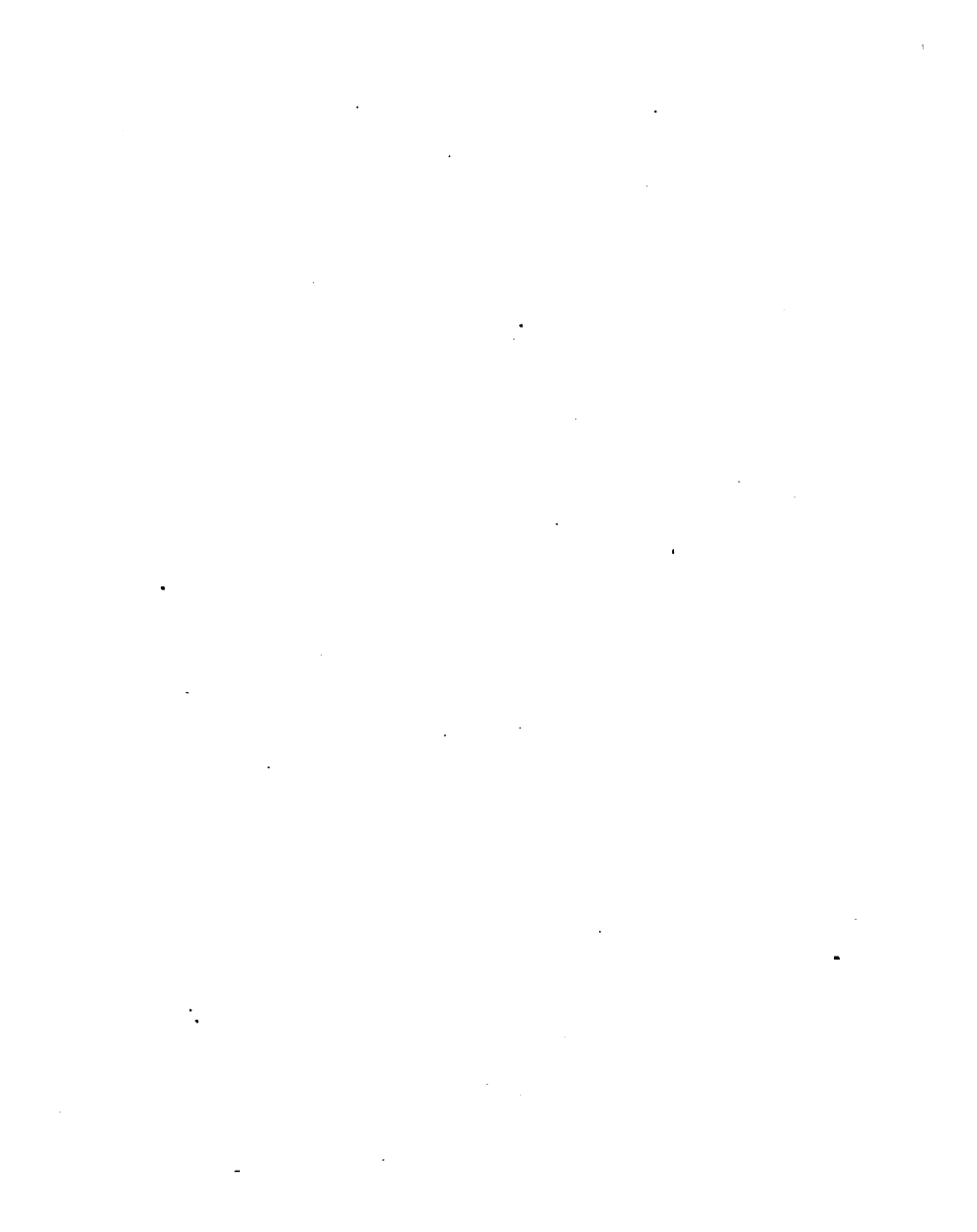
xiii

	PAGE
The Punishment of Unbelief. Num. xi. xiii. xiv. . . . .	97
The Rebellion. Num. xvi. xvii. . . . .	100
The Sin of Moses. Num. xx. . . . .	103
The Brazen Serpent. Num. xxi. . . . .	107
Balak and Balaam. Num. xxii. xxiii. xxiv. xxv. . . . .	109
The Death of Moses. Deut. . . . .	114
The Waters of Jordan. Josh. i. ii. iii. . . . .	117
The Fall of Jericho. Josh. v. vi. . . . .	119
The Taking of Ai. Josh. vii. viii. . . . .	122
The Fight at Makkedah. Josh. ix. x. xi. . . . .	124
The Death of Joshua. Josh. xii.-xxiv. . . . .	127
The Theocracy. Judges xvii. xviii. xix. xx. xxi. (1, 2) . . . .	129
Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. Judges iii. . . . .	131
Deborah and Barak. Judges iv. v. . . . .	134
Gideon. Judges vi. vii. viii. . . . .	136
Jephthah's Daughter. Judges ix. x. xi. xii. . . . .	141
Samson. Judges xiii. xiv. xv. xvi. . . . .	143
Eli. 1 Sam. i. ii. . . . .	146
Samuel. 1 Sam. iii. . . . .	148
The Ark of God. 1 Sam. iv. v. vi. . . . .	150
Saul, the Son of Kish. 1 Sam. viii. ix. x. . . . .	153
The Storm in Harvest. 1 Sam. xii. . . . .	156
Jonathan. 1 Sam. xiii. xiv. . . . .	158

	PAGE
The Sin of Saul. 1 Sam. xv. . . . .	161
David the Shepherd. 1 Sam. xvi. . . . .	164
David and Goliath. 1 Sam. xvii. . . . .	166
Jonathan and David. 1 Sam. xviii. xix. . . . .	169
The Cave at Adullam. 1 Sam. xx. xxi. xxii. xxiii. xxiv. ; 1 Chron. xi. . . . .	172
The Deaths of Samuel, Saul, and Jonathan. 1 Sam. xxvi. xxvii. xxviii. xxix. xxx. xxxi. ; 2 Sam. i. . . . .	178
David the King. 2 Sam. ii. iii. iv. v. . . . .	183
The Ark restored in Triumph. 2 Sam. v. vi. vii. ; 1 Chron. xiii. xv. xvi. xvii. . . . .	187
David's Sin. 2 Sam. x. xi. xii. ; 1 Chron. xix. . . . .	190
The Rebellion of Absalom. 2 Sam. xv. xvi. . . . .	194
David in Exile. 2 Sam. xvii. xviii. . . . .	196
The Death of Absalom. 2 Sam. xviii. xix. . . . .	199
The Famine and the Pestilence. 2 Sam. xxi. xxiv. ; 1 Chron. xx. xxi. xxix. . . . .	206
The Reign of Solomon. 1 Kings ii. iii. ; 2 Chron. i. . . . .	210
The Temple of the Most High. 1 Kings iv. v. vi. vii. viii. ; 2 Chron. ii. iii. iv. v. vi. vii. . . . .	213
Summary, . . . . .	217

## NOTICE.

It is recommended here, as before, that the Index, Events, and corresponding Chapters, should be learned *thoroughly* by heart.



A  
HISTORY OF GOD'S CHURCH OF OLD.

---

*LESSON FIRST.*

THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

◁ IN the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. In six days, or times, did the Lord God create them ; and He called them very good.

On the seventh day God rested from His work. Man, the greatest of all His works on this earth, was made out of the dust in the image of God Himself ; and the Almighty gave him existence by breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

And God placed the first man Adam in the beautiful Garden of Eden, with permission to eat of all the fruits in it, save that of one tree—the tree of knowledge of good and evil. To complete his happiness,

▲

God gave him a companion, a woman formed from himself, from a bone taken from Adam's own side, whilst a deep slumber was upon him. God gave her to him to be his wife, and the mother of all who should live on the earth, thus sanctifying for ever the holy state of marriage.

How blissful the state of our first parents was in that beauteous garden we may never know in our fallen state, and had they but obeyed the orders of their God, it would have been everlasting. But, alas ! the tempter soon came to them, and Eve, after yielding to that old serpent the devil, and eating of the one fruit which was forbidden them, led her husband into the like sin.

God's curse followed rapidly on their fall, which delivered them, and their children after them, into the power of their enemy the devil ; though with the anger of the Most High came His mercy ; His promise that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head ; that promise which was to enable Adam and his children to bear all the misery, even to death, which that first sin had brought with it.

Thus we see that Adam and Eve were created perfectly good and happy ; and that God gave to them the Garden of Eden, which was to be theirs so long as they obeyed Him.

This was a covenant between God and man. But man broke his part of the covenant, and so brought on

himself punishment and death, though with that punishment came the merciful promise of the "woman's Seed."

---

*LESSON SECOND.*

SIN AND DEATH.

WHEN God had turned Adam and Eve out of the lovely garden, He taught them to offer sacrifices of animals when they sinned, in order that the blood of these innocent creatures shed for guilty man might lead them to look forward to One, all-holy, all-pure, who would one day come to bear our punishment.

Soon Adam and Eve had two children, Cain and Abel—

"The two first babes that ever watched  
The round sun rise,"

Abel, we are told, offered his sacrifice of a lamb in obedience and faith; but Cain wilfully offered fruit; and when he saw that Abel's offering was accepted of the Lord whilst his was rejected, he rose up in his envy and anger and slew his brother; and so the earth was red with blood, the blood of one brother murdered by the other.

---

Cain was cast out from the presence of God, and became a wanderer on the earth, so that Adam and Eve lost their two sons in one day.

Another son, Seth, however was born to them, who was to bring up his children in the fear of the Lord ; and they continued righteous until they mixed with and married the wicked descendants of Cain, and learned their sinful ways.

Then indeed the whole earth became full of violence and wickedness.

We are told that God repented that He had made man : for all his thoughts were evil continually.

At length, when there was but one righteous man left on the earth, God declared in His wrath that He would destroy the whole world with a flood.

In those times men's lives were much longer than they are now : they lived many of them to be nearly a thousand years old.

There were giants, too, upon the earth in those days.

---



*LESSON THIRD.*

## THE FLOOD.

IN the last lesson we learned how the wickedness of men had already brought sentence of destruction on this earth.

Now I must tell you how Noah, the one good man, was saved. He was told by the Lord to build an ark, which would float on the top of the waters that were to destroy all flesh.

A hundred and twenty years was Noah building this ark, and all this time he repeatedly warned the wicked around him to repent ere it was too late; but they mocked and laughed at him.

At length the ark was finished, and Noah and his wife, his sons and their wives, eight people in all, entered into it, taking with them two of every kind of animal and bird, besides enough to feed themselves whilst they were in the ark.

For forty days it rained; the rivers burst their bounds, and the sea came up over the earth, till at length every living thing was drowned, and even the tops of the highest mountains were covered with water.

A whole year Noah and his family spent in the ark,

safe amid the ruins of the perishing world under the shelter of the Almighty wings.

At length the ark rested on the lofty top of Mount Ararat, and Noah wished to discover if the waters had gone off the earth ; he therefore sent a raven out of the ark. The bird found the earth covered with water ; but he was of too fierce a nature to bear to return to the ark ; so he continued flying over the wide waste of waters till they went down.

Next Noah sent forth a dove, which soon returned to him ; for out of the ark it found no rest. After a week he sent the gentle bird forth a second time, and then it brought back in its beak an olive leaf ; and when in another week it was again sent out, it returned no more ; so that Noah knew that the waters were gone off the face of the earth.

---

#### *LESSON FOURTH.*

### NOAH'S SACRIFICE AND COVENANT.

NOAH had been a year in the ark when the Lord God called him forth. And he came out with his wife, his three sons, and their wives.

Noah's first act, when he again felt the fresh air of

heaven, was to offer a solemn sacrifice of thanksgiving to the God who had so mercifully preserved him.

And the Lord blessed Noah, and made a fresh covenant with him, promising him never again to drown the world, giving him dominion over every animal on the earth, each bird in the air, and all fish in the sea ; also permitting him to use every living creature for food, only forbidding him ever to eat blood which is life.

At this time, too, was set the price upon human blood which has belonged to it ever since : for the Lord said, " Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed : for in the image of God made He man."

And God set the beautiful rainbow in the clouds as a sign of His merciful promise that never more would He bring a flood of waters over the whole earth.

So you see we have to-day learnt of the second covenant between God and man. The first, with Adam, was *The covenant of obedience* ; the second, with Noah, was *The covenant of mercy*.

---

*LESSON FIFTH.*

## C O N F U S I O N .

SOON amongst the sons of Noah, as amongst those of Adam, did the bad distinguish himself from the good. Ham, the second son, was guilty of a gross act of disrespect to his father, for which he and his children were cursed by Noah.

Shem and Japheth were blessed, and Ham and his children were to serve them. Shem, the first-born, was especially to be the chosen of God, whilst Japheth was to dwell in his tents, and share in his blessing.

About a hundred years after the deluge, the children of men united together and agreed to build a tower, which was to reach to the heavens, and in which they might dwell safely in case of another flood. Thus they impiously forgot the Lord's merciful promise to Noah; and for their pride and wickedness God so confounded their speech that they could no longer understand one another. So they separated and wandered off into different parts of the world, forming for themselves separate kingdoms. Their unfinished tower was named "Babel," or confusion.

---

*LESSON SIXTH.*

## THE DISPERSION.

Now I want you to try and understand where the children of the sons of Noah settled, and how all the nations now on earth have sprung from them.

We will first speak of Shem, the eldest. Most of his children seem to have remained in the plains of Mesopotamia, near the tower of Babel. From one of these was afterwards descended Abraham the faithful whom the Almighty called to be the earthly ancestor of His only Son, thus fulfilling Noah's blessing to the dutiful Shem. Others went eastwards into lands called by us India and China. These grew, in course of time, into wealthy nations, but they gradually lost all knowledge of the one true God.

Some of the children of Ham too remained on the plains ; indeed, his grandson Nimrod kept the tower, and founded a city round it, of which he made himself king, and which became in time, under the name of Babylon, the greatest city in the world. Another of Ham's sons, called Canaan, travelled westward to Palestine, or the Holy Land, which you know God afterwards gave to His own people, the descendants of faithful Abraham. Another called Mizraim went on still farther to the south-west, and settled in the fertile

land of Egypt, where his children soon became the richest and cleverest of all men then on the earth. Others of his descendants wandered into the southern parts of Africa : from them are descended the poor slaves who are still so cruelly bought and sold, and are bearing to this day the curse upon Ham.

Japheth's children wandered on the contrary northwards and westwards. We and the other European nations come from them.

Thus you see how God's words through Noah have been fulfilled ; for have not we, the children of Japheth, been mercifully called to share in the blessings brought to this earth by the Almighty Son of Shem ?

---

*LESSON SEVENTH.*

## THE CALL OF ABRAHAM.

I TOLD you in our last lesson that of the sons of Shem most of them remained in Mesopotamia, not far from the tower of Babel. They seem to have remembered more about God and the truth than the other descendants of Noah ; but even they were fast lapsing into idolatry, when from amongst them the Almighty called faithful Abram to preserve and keep alive His truth.

He was called to leave his father and the house in which he was born, to go to another land which God would show him and give to his children. Abram had at that time no child at all, but he believed what the Lord told him; and so he, with his beautiful wife Sarai, and his nephew Lot, journeyed to the goodly land of Canaan.

Then God renewed His promise to Abram, that the whole land should belong to his children. But Lot's servants quarrelled with those of his uncle, so that they thought it better to separate. Abram gave his nephew the choice as to which part of the land he would take for himself, whereupon he selected the beautiful and fertile valley of the Jordan, which then, with its fair cities, lay before him; but which now, alas! lies beneath the stagnant waters of the Dead Sea. Abram retired to the plains of Mamre at Hebron.

Soon after this separation Lot and his people were taken prisoners, and carried off by some of the Canaanitish kings. When Abram heard of it, he armed 318 of his own servants, and, pursuing them, delivered his nephew.

After this victory Abram was blessed, and received bread and wine from the mysterious Melchizedek, King of Salem, who was a priest of the most high God. And to him Abram paid tithes of all.

*LESSON EIGHTH.*

## THE BIRTH OF ISHMAEL.

ABRAM was now granted one son, who was not however the child of his wife Sarai, but of her hand-maiden Hagar. Before his birth Hagar treated her mistress with such contempt, that with Abram's permission Sarai punished her for it; and in the pride of her heart Hagar fled from the face of her mistress. She fled to the wilderness, and there, beside a fountain, an angel of the Lord came to her, and bade her return and submit herself to Sarai. And the angel declared to her that she should become the mother of a son, who would be the father of a great nation.

Hagar obeyed; and in due time her son was born and was named Ishmael. He did indeed become the father of a multitude, for all the hosts of Arabs are descended from him; and they live to this day in their tents the same sort of life that their forefather Ishmael must have lived in the time so long ago.

When Ishmael was about thirteen years old, the Lord established a new covenant with Abram, of which the terms were as follows:—Abram believed, and for that faith or belief he was to become the father of many nations. His very name, Abram, was to be



changed to Abraham, which means, "Father of a great multitude." Sarai also was to be called Sarah, or Princess: for she was to be the mother of nations, and kings of people should be descended from her.

The sign of this covenant was to be circumcision. And Abraham, Ishmael his son, and all his men-servants were circumcised on the same day.

At about this time Abraham sat one hot noon in the entrance of his tent, when lo ! three men stood by him. And when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, praying them to rest, wash, and refresh themselves, under the shade of the great tree.

And they did so.

And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and bade her speedily to bake cakes on the hearth, whilst he ran himself to the herd and fetched a calf tender and good, which he gave to be dressed.

When the meat and the cakes were ready, Abraham, great chief as he was, served them and waited on his guests in person. And truly it was fitting that he should do so, for his guests were angels from heaven, and his hospitality was nobly rewarded ; for the angelic visitors brought to Abraham the gracious promise of another son, who should be the child of his wife Sarah.

Sarah from within the tent heard the promise and

## 14 THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN.

laughed, thinking herself far too old for such joy. Spite, however, of her incredulity, the promise was renewed to her.

At this time also the Lord revealed unto Abraham that He was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities of the plain where Lot dwelt, for their great wickedness.

Abraham interceded earnestly for these cities, and at length obtained the gracious assurance that if fifty righteous men were found in them they would be safe.

The fifty were not to be found; but at the prayer of faithful Abraham the number was reduced to forty-five, then to forty, thirty, twenty, and even ten. But alas! even ten good men did not exist in all the plain. So the cities were left to their doom.

---

### *LESSON NINTH.*

## THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN.

AND there came two angels to Sodom at even, and Lot sat in the gate of the city; and when he saw them he rose up to meet them, and bowed himself

with his face toward the ground, and prayed them to come to his house, and eat bread and tarry there all night.

And they did so. And when they were in Lot's house they told him to take his sons, his daughters, and his sons-in-law, and to escape from the guilty city : for the Lord was going to destroy it because of its great wickedness. And Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, and warned them to leave the place ; but they heeded him not ; for he seemed to them as one that mocked. The next morning the angels hastened Lot, telling him to escape quickly with his wife and his two daughters, before the city was consumed. And as Lot lingered, not liking to leave the place he loved and in which lay all his worldly goods, the angels led them forth out of the town ; for the Lord was merciful to them. And they bade them escape quickly for their lives : they were not to look behind them, but to fly to the mountain lest they should be consumed.

And when they were gone, the Lord rained down upon Sodom and Gomorrah fire and brimstone from heaven ; and the cities were utterly destroyed with all those who dwelt in them.

Lot and his daughters escaped safely ; but his wife looked back longingly upon the towns which she loved, and immediately she was turned into a pillar of salt.

To this day the pitchy waters of the Dead Sea lie in the once beautiful plain of the Jordan. No plant grows on its banks, no living thing dwells near it. It is there, silent, dreadful, and accursed—an awful and lasting witness of the wrath of the Lord.

---

*LESSON TENTH.*

THE BIRTH OF ISAAC.

IN due time Sarah's son was born and was circumcised as his father and his brother Ishmael had been ; and he was named Isaac. Ishmael seems to have been jealous of his young brother, for we are told that Sarah saw him mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, "Cast out this bond-woman and her son ; for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son . . . Isaac."

And it grieved Abraham to the heart to do this thing, to cast out his own son. But God comforted Abraham, and told him to do as Sarah wished ; for though Isaac was to inherit the blessing, yet still for faithful Abraham's sake Ishmael should be the father of a nation.

So, early in the morning, Abraham arose and sent Hagar forth with her son, giving her bread and a bottle of water.

Hagar started forth with her child in her arms, and her bottle or skin of water slung over her shoulder. She wandered lonely and forlorn in the wilderness of Beersheba, which lies to the south of Canaan. Soon all the water they had was gone; and Hagar thinking that her boy must die of thirst, laid him down under a shrub, whilst she sat down some distance from him: for she said, "Let me not see the death of the child."

And she lifted up her voice and wept.

But the Lord heard the cry of the lad, and took pity on her; and His angel called to her from heaven and said, "What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, . . . for I will make him a great nation."

And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she gave to her boy to drink.

And God was with Ishmael; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

And his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

---

*LESSON ELEVENTH.*

## THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC.

SOMETIME after this we are told that God tempted Abraham, that is He put His servant's faith and love to the test.

The Lord called to him and said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Surely we may imagine the grief and terror in Abraham's heart at this command. His son, his only son, the child of his old age, through whom the promised Seed was to come, he was called upon to offer in sacrifice unto the God who had given him. But here, as ever, he lovingly and faithfully obeyed. He rose up early in the morning and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and together they went to the place of which God had told him.

On the third day of their journey, Abraham saw the place afar off. And he said to his young men, "Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."

And Abraham laid the wood for the burnt-offering upon his son, and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife ; and they went both of them together.

And Isaac said, "My father, . . . behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering ?"

And Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." So they went, both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of ; and Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven, saying, "Abraham, Abraham."

And he answered, "Here am I."

And the angel continued, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him : for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me."

And when Abraham looked up, he saw before him a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. And he took it and offered it as a burnt-offering instead of his son.

After this the Lord again renewed His covenant with Abraham, saying,

whether he and his men might lodge with her father that night.

She answered that her name was Rebekah, and that she was the daughter of Nahor ; she also said that they had both room for him to lodge in and provender for his beasts.

The good old man bowed his head and worshipped the Lord, saying, " Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham."

Rebekah ran on to inform her people of the new arrival ; and immediately her brother Laban came forth to meet the travellers, saying, " Come in, thou blessed of the Lord." And he brought them into the house, fed the camels, gave the men water to wash their feet, and set food before the steward.

He however would not touch meat until he had told his errand. He told them of the birth of Isaac, and how Abraham had sent him to choose a wife for him from out of his own kindred. He then asked them plainly if they would give Rebekah to his master's son ?

Bethuel and Laban answered that she had already chosen for herself and might go, whereupon the old servant again worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the ground.

He then made further presents of gold, silver, and raiment to Rebekah and her mother ; and after rest-



ing a night, begged to be allowed to take her with him and depart at once.

So they sent her away with her nurse. As before, it was eventide when the old steward and his charge reached their destination. And the first person they saw was Isaac, who had roamed out into the fields to meditate.

When Rebekah had heard who he was, she alighted from her camel, timidly veiling herself; but Isaac joyfully led her into the tent that had been his mother's. "And he loved her, and was comforted."

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### *LESSON THIRTEENTH.*

## ESAU AND JACOB.—THE BIRTHRIGHT AND THE BLESSING.

ABRAHAM married again a woman named Keturah, who became the mother of several sons. He died at the age of a hundred and seventy-five, and was buried by his sons Isaac and Ishmael in the cave of Machpelah, beside the beloved wife of his youth.

After this twin-sons were born to Isaac. The

eldest, named Esau, became a great hunter ; but the youngest, Jacob, remained in the tent with his parents. We are told that Esau profanely sold his birthright—the right that belonged to him as eldest—of inheriting the glorious promise that in his Seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

He had come in from the field, faint, tired, almost dying with hunger, and he found Jacob eating pottage, or broth. He begged his brother to give him some of his pottage, telling him that he was faint. Jacob at once asked him for his birthright in exchange for the food ; and Esau faithlessly replied, “ Behold, I am at the point to die ; and what profit shall this birthright do to me ? ” thus doubting the love and power of the God Who had given him the birthright, and Who also would preserve him for it.

Jacob gave him the pottage, after he had sealed the bargain with an oath ; and so the highest, most glorious privilege possible on earth, was sold for a little food.

As Isaac grew old his sight failed ; and when he was quite blind he wished to bestow on his eldest and favourite son Esau his blessing—the blessing which, in those patriarchal times, was of such value, for it conveyed the favour of the Lord.

Isaac therefore called Esau to him, and told him to take his quiver and his bow and to go out into the

field and bring him venison, that he might eat and bless him before he died.

Esau heard and went ; but Rebekah also was present when her husband sent forth his son. She called Jacob and told him what had taken place, and how Isaac was going solemnly to bless Esau. And she commanded Jacob to fetch from the flock two young kids, which she dressed as venison, after the fashion that Isaac loved. She then clothed Jacob in some of Esau's garments, covering his neck and hands with the skin of the kids ; for Esau's skin was, unlike Jacob's, hairy and rough. Thus disguised did Rebekah send her youngest-born into the presence of his father.

The aged Isaac asked, " Who art thou, my son ? "

And Jacob answered, " I am Esau, thy first-born ; I have done according as thou badest me : arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. "

But, like all blind people, Isaac's sense of hearing was keen, and he knew the voice was not that of Esau. He doubtingly said, " How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son ? "

Jacob sinfully answered, " Because the Lord thy God brought it to me. "

Then, as a certain test, Isaac felt his hands ; and when he found them rough and hairy, he was convinced, and said, " The voice is Jacob's voice ; but the

hands are the hands of Esau ;” and after one more solemn assurance that he was in very deed his first-born, Isaac took the venison and ate it. Then he bade his son come near and kiss him ; and when he had done so, he blessed him, saying, . . . “ God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine : let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee : be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother’s sons bow down to thee : cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.”

The blessing was scarce given ere the true Esau arrived with his venison, praying his father to arise and eat, and bless him.

Isaac amazed asked, “ Who art thou ? ”

Again came the answer, “ I am Esau, thy first-born.”

The blind father trembled exceedingly as he said, “ Who ? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him ? yea, and he shall be blessed.”

At these words Esau cried with an exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, “ Bless me, even me also, O my father ! . . . Hast thou but one blessing, my father ? bless me, even me also, O my father ! ”

And he lifted up his voice and wept.

Then Isaac blessed him also, promising him that

he should break his brother's yoke from off his own neck.

Thus did Jacob twice supplant his brother. But though we must condemn the deceit by which he obtained the blessing, let us never lose sight of the faith which enabled him to value the birthright.

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#### *LESSON FOURTEENTH.*

#### JACOB'S DREAM.

RAGE filled Esau's heart at the success of his brother's treachery, and he determined to slay him as soon as his father was dead. Rebekah heard of this, so she called Jacob, warned him of Esau's anger, and sent him away to her own brother Laban in Mesopotamia, until Esau's wrath should have passed away.

So, with a renewed blessing from his aged father, and a command not to marry amongst the sinful daughters of Canaan, but to take a wife from his mother's kindred, Jacob set forth.

Alone he set forth, with none on earth to guide him, none to cheer him : still Jacob was not lonely, for He was with him in Whom he believed and trusted.

One night he lay down on the bare earth to rest, with only a stone for his pillow ; but even thus his rest was most sweet and beautiful : for he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven ! and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it ! And above the ladder was the glory of God Himself, who there renewed His merciful promise to Abraham : " I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac : the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed ; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south : and in thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again to this land ; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Loneliness and desolateness must indeed have been far from one cheered with such visions as these. When Jacob awoke he was afraid, and said, "How dreadful is this place ! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven !"

And Jacob anointed with oil the stone that had been his pillow through that wondrous night. And he called the place Beth-El, which means, the House of God.

*LESSON FIFTEENTH.*

## JACOB IN MESOPOTAMIA.

At length Jacob reached the eastern land of Mesopotamia. And he sat down to rest by the side of a well. Flocks of sheep were gathered round it, waiting for the shepherds to remove the great stone on the mouth of the well and to give them to drink. Jacob asked some of these shepherds whence they came ; and when they answered from Haran, he inquired after Laban his uncle, for he was of Haran.

The men answered that they knew him, and that he was well ; and they added, " Behold his daughter Rachel cometh with the sheep."

Whilst he was yet speaking with them, the beautiful Rachel came up with her father's sheep. And Jacob wept with delight at the sight of this his cousin, and kissed her. He told her that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.

Laban came out to meet his nephew ; and he embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house, where he remained for a month. At the end of that time Laban offered Jacob wages for his services. Now Laban had two daughters—Leah the elder, and Rachel the younger. Jacob had from the first loved

his fair cousin Rachel, and he at once said that he would serve his uncle seven years, if at the end of that time she might be his wife. To this Laban agreed.

The seven years passed by and Jacob claimed his promised bride. Laban made a great wedding-feast, and in the darkness of the evening Leah was passed off upon the unsuspecting Jacob for his beloved Rachel. The day following he reproached his uncle for his deceit, whereupon Laban said that it was not the custom of that country to marry a younger before an elder daughter; but that if Jacob chose he might work another seven years for Rachel. This he did lovingly and faithfully, counting them all as nothing for the great love which he bore her.

Leah had several sons and one daughter; but for a long time Rachel had no children, which grieved her sorely. At length, however, God granted her one son, whom she named Joseph, and who, for his dear mother's sake, was the especial joy of his father's heart.

After these fourteen years of service for his wives, Jacob remained with Laban yet six years, receiving a certain portion of the increase of the flock each year as his hire. At the end of that time he was told by God to return to his own country. So he started with his two wives, his children, and his cattle.

On his way he was met by a vision of angels, and he named the place Mahanaim. And he came to



Mount Seir, the country of his brother Esau. And men told him that Esau was coming to meet him. At these tidings the timid Jacob feared exceedingly. He prayed earnestly to God, the God of Abraham and Isaac, for mercy and protection then ; he sent a large present of cattle to his brother.

That night, in a wondrous and mysterious manner, Jacob wrestled with the Lord Himself, who appeared to him in a human form ; he wrestled for a blessing, and he obtained that which he desired so earnestly. And his Divine Visitor bestowed on him the name of Israel, which means, a prince of God.

The next day Jacob beheld his brother coming, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children into three bands, one of which he placed in front with the maid-servants, the next he placed with Leah, and lastly came the well-beloved Rachel and her son Joseph. He himself went on before them, and came to meet Esau, bowing seven times to the very ground. But Esau had completely forgotten his old anger ; he ran to meet his brother and embraced him warmly, and fell on his neck and kissed him. He wished Jacob to travel in his company, but from this he excused himself, saying, that the children and cattle must needs proceed very slowly. And so they parted.

Again after this did Jacob receive a special blessing of the Lord, and a renewal of his name of Israel.

Shortly after, Rachel died in giving birth to a son, whom Jacob named Benjamin.

And Jacob, after burying her at Bethlehem, journeyed on to Hebron, where he again saw his father Isaac, who soon after died at the age of a hundred and eighty, and was buried by his sons Esau and Jacob.

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### *LESSON SIXTEENTH.*

## JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

AFTER the death of Isaac, Esau, with his wives, children, and cattle, settled himself at Mount Seir, near the borders of that sea which was called after him the Red; for Edom or Esau means red. Jacob with his twelve sons remained in Canaan. The names of these sons were Reuben and Simeon, Levi and Judah, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher, Issachar and Zebulun, and Joseph and Benjamin.

As I before told you, Joseph was very dear to Jacob for his mother's sake. And he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw how their father loved him, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

Joseph had two dreams too which greatly increased their envy. He dreamed firstly, that they were all together binding sheaves in the field ; and lo ! Joseph's sheaf arose and stood upright, whilst his brothers' sheaves stood around and made obeisance to it.

When Joseph told them this dream, they were loud in their anger about it, saying, " Shalt thou indeed reign over us ? "

In the second he dreamed that the sun, moon, and eleven stars, made obeisance to him. He told this dream to his father as well as his brethren, and even Jacob then rebuked him for his presumption, saying, " What is this dream that thou hast dreamed ? Shall I, and thy mother, and thy brethren, indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee, to the earth ? "

Some time after this the ten elder sons had taken their flocks for grass down to Sychem. Jacob was anxious to hear how they and the sheep were doing, so he sent Joseph to inquire after them.

Joseph started forth from the vale of Hebron, wearing his pretty coat, his father's gift, and little guessing how long a time must elapse, and how many troubles he must pass through, ere he should see that dear father's face again.

After some time he found his brothers. They spied him from afar off, and said to one another, " Behold, now this dreamer cometh ; come now, therefore, and let

us slay him, and cast him into some pit; and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

But when Reuben the eldest heard it, he said, "Let us not kill him; shed no blood; but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him."

His intention was to get Joseph safe out of their hands, and take him back to his father.

So they stripped Joseph of his coat of many colours, and they took him and cast him into a dry pit. And they left him there, and sat down to eat. And as they were so eating a party of Ishmaelites, traders in spices, passed them on their way to Egypt. Judah advised that they should sell Joseph as a slave to these men, and so get rid of him without being guilty of his blood. So they sold him for twenty pieces of silver; and the tradesmen took him with them down into Egypt, where they again sold him to a man named Potiphar, who was chamberlain to the Pharaoh or king of Egypt, and also captain of his guard.

Reuben must have been absent when Joseph was sold to the traders, for he returned to the pit to fetch him, and was in great grief when he found him not, saying, "The child is not, and I, whither shall I go?"

But the cruel brothers took the pretty coat, the coat of many colours, and after killing a kid dipped it in the

blood. Then they finished their wickedness by taking it home to their old father, and saying, "This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no?"

And Jacob knew it, and said, "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces."

And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his beloved Joseph many days. His children rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted; "For," he said, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning."

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### *LESSON SEVENTEENTH.*

## JOSEPH IN EGYPT.

**MEANTIME** Joseph had been sold in Egypt to a chief officer of Pharaoh's household.

And here I should wish you to remember that the Egyptians were descended from Mizraim, that son of Ham who had settled in Egypt, the country fertilised by the broad and beautiful river Nile.

And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man. He served his master truly, with no eye-

service, with no grudging or repining at his hard lot. He honestly and truly did his very best in the station to which God had called him, and he was rewarded for it : for his master saw that the Lord was with him, and made all that he did to prosper. And he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put in his hand.

And from that time the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake.

But Joseph's faithfulness and integrity were to be tried most sorely, in a fire of temptation and suffering. Potiphar had a wicked and deceitful wife ; this evil-minded woman loved the good and handsome Joseph with a love which was a sin against her own trusting husband ; nor did her wickedness rest here, for she tried to beguile the pure-minded Joseph by her evil words into the like sin.

Joseph, however, had but one answer to all her allurements, " How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? "

At length her evil love was turned to bitter wrath and hatred. She complained to her husband of his trusty servant, vehemently accusing him of the very sin into which she herself had fallen. Potiphar, as was natural, believed his false wife. In his anger he cast Joseph into the king's prison, where he was bound with fetters of iron.

Even here, however, his righteousness was felt and known ; for the keeper of the prison, who must have perceived how much Joseph differed from all the others under his charge, soon began to place such confidence in him that all the other prisoners were committed to his care. Like Potiphar, the jailor looked not to anything that was under his hand ; because the Lord was with Joseph, and made what he did to prosper.

Joseph was thus, as we may say, the chief personage in the prison, when one day two very important prisoners were brought in—the chief butler and the chief baker of Pharaoh's household.

One morning, when Joseph came to attend to these two as usual, he perceived that their countenances were sad. He asked them what ailed them. They answered that they had dreamed dreams which had disturbed them ; whereupon he begged them to tell him their dreams ; for God might enable him to interpret them.

Accordingly the butler commenced. In his dream he had seen a vine which had three branches. They budded, blossomed, and bore fruit. This fruit the butler plucked and pressed into Pharaoh's cup, which he then gave into Pharaoh's hand.

Joseph said, "This is the interpretation of it ; the three branches are three days : yet within three d

shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place ; and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

"But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house : for indeed . . . I have done nothing that they should put me into this dungeon."

The baker, emboldened by this favourable interpretation, now told his dream. He had dreamed that three white baskets were upon his head. In the topmost of these were baked meats for Pharaoh, which the birds came and eat.

Alas ! sad indeed was Joseph's interpretation of this vision. He said, "The three baskets are three days : yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree ; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee."

As Joseph had said, so it was. Three days from thence was the king's birthday, at which time he made a feast to all his servants. On the feast day he restored his butler to his former place ; but the baker was hanged, as had been foretold.

Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.



*LESSON EIGHTEENTH.*

## PHARAOH'S DREAM.

FOR two long years more Joseph lingered on in prison, seemingly forgotten by all. At the end of that time however an event occurred which led to a marvellous change in his life.

Pharaoh dreamed a dream,—a dream which troubled him sorely, and which none could interpret to him. It was as follows. He seemed in his sleep to be standing on the banks of the Nile, when behold there came out of the river seven kine, well-favoured and fat-fleshed ; and they fed in a meadow. And behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill-favoured and lean-fleshed ; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill-favoured and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the seven well-favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh woke.

And again he slept and dreamed a second time ; and behold, in his dream seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, large and good ; and after them came seven thin ears, blasted with the east wind. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven large ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold it was a dream.

And in the morning Pharaoh's spirit was troubled

because of his dream. He sent for the magicians and wise men of Egypt ; but there was none that could interpret his dream to him.

At length the butler remembered Joseph, and spoke of him to the king, who sent for him at once to the prison.

And Pharaoh told him his dreams. When he had heard them, Joseph said, "The dream of Pharaoh is one : God hath showed Pharaoh what He is about to do."

And he went on to say that the seven fat kine and the seven large ears of corn both meant seven years of great plenty and prosperity, which were coming upon the land of Egypt. But the seven lean kine and the seven blighted ears meant seven years of grievous famine, which should follow the years of plenty, and utterly consume the land.

The doubling of the dream meant that it would surely come to pass, and would not tarry. Therefore Joseph advised Pharaoh to collect one-fifth part of the corn during the seven years of plenty, and store it away as a provision for the time of famine.

Joseph's advice pleased the king well. He not only determined to follow it, but he made him chief ruler of the whole of the land. He clothed him in fine linen, placed his own ring on his finger, a gold chain round his neck, and gave him a chariot to ride in,

with orders that every Egyptian should bow the knee to him, and that he should be second only to Pharaoh himself.

Joseph was thirty years old when he was thus taken from a dungeon, and raised to the summit of human grandeur.

He married an Egyptian, who became the mother of two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. They were born before the years of famine came on. During those seven years of plenty Joseph gathered all the corn he could together, and at last he had so much that he ceased to measure it.

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*LESSON NINETEENTH.**THE FAMINE.*

BUT the years of plenty drew to an end, and the years of dearth came on. Over all the earth was the famine felt, saving in the land of Egypt: there Joseph's wisdom and forethought had reserved a plentiful supply of corn. Jacob, afar off in the land of Canaan, heard of the food in Egypt, and he sent his ten elder sons thither to buy bread: Benjamin h<sup>h</sup>

would not send ; he could not bear to part from his Rachel's only remaining child.

Joseph as governor sold and dispensed the corn, and to him therefore his brethren came to buy their food. They bowed themselves low to the earth before the great man, not recognising in the Egyptian prince the younger brother whom they supposed dead. Joseph, however, knew them at once ; he remembered his dreams of old, and carefully disguised his voice. He spoke roughly to them, and accused them of being spies, who had come to discover the poverty of the land.

They earnestly defended themselves, saying that they were all ten the sons of one man who dwelt in Canaan, that one of their brothers was dead, and that the youngest had remained behind with their father.

Joseph pretended not to believe their account : he declared that he would send one of them home to fetch the young brother of whom they spoke, and thereby prove their tale, whether it were true or false, and that until his return the nine remaining should be imprisoned. In the meantime he sent them all ten to prison for three days.

At the end of that time he sent for them, and telling them that he feared God, he sent home nine of them to fetch Benjamin, whilst he kept back one, Simeon, as a surety for the others.

Reuben, the eldest, upon this spoke to his brothers in their own tongue, little dreaming how well the great governor understood. He told them that all this was but the punishment sent them for their cruelty and wickedness towards Joseph, whom he, as well as the others, thought dead.

Joseph turned aside to weep at their words ; still he relaxed not his stern outward behaviour. He caused Simeon to be bound before him, and led away : he then gave orders that their sacks should be filled with corn, and also that the money they had paid for it should be secretly returned in their sacks.

Great was Jacob's dismay and sorrow at their return. He absolutely refused to allow Benjamin to go down into Egypt ; and when Reuben offered his own two sons as hostages for his safe return, he answered, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead and he is left alone : if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

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*LESSON TWENTIETH.*

## THE THEFT.

BUT the famine abated not. Soon the corn which the brothers had brought was gone, and then Israel their father said, "Go again, buy us a little food."

Judah answered for the rest that if Benjamin were allowed to go with them they would go at once, but not otherwise: for the Egyptian had told them that without their brother they should not see his face again.

Jacob reproached them for ever telling the man that they had a brother.

Then Judah stood forth and made himself surety for his brother's safety, and at length with a heavy heart Israel consented to let him go. He told them to take the man a present, and also the money which they had found in their sacks on their return; and said he, "God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

So they set forth with their present and their double money. Joseph must have been watching, and have seen them from a distance, for he sent his steward to

meet them, telling him to bring them to his own house, and to kill and make ready a dinner for them at noon.

Sorely did the brothers fear and tremble when they found themselves in the great man's own house. They brought the returned money at once to the steward, telling him that they knew not who could have placed it in their sacks. He however told them not to fear, for that their money had reached him quite safely ; and then he brought out Simeon to them. He gave them also water for their feet, and food for their weary beasts ; and told them that they were to dine in the house.

Soon Joseph came home, and the brothers brought him their present, bowing themselves to the earth again before him. He asked after the old man their father ; and when he had been told that he was alive and well, he looked at Benjamin and asked if he was the young brother of whom they had spoken, adding, " God be gracious to thee, my son."

He longed ardently to embrace this dear brother, his own mother's son ; he could contain himself no longer, but he entered into his own chamber and wept there.

The time for the feast was come however, so Joseph washed his face and told his attendants to set on bread. So they prepared for Joseph by himself, for the brothers by themselves, and for the Egyptians by themselves.

The Egyptians could not sit with the Hebrews ; for the latter were shepherds, and a shepherd was an abomination to an Egyptian ever since their beautiful and fertile country had been overrun by a wild and fierce race of shepherd kings.

To the amazement of the brothers, they were placed each in their proper place, according to age. And they ate and were merry, each having as much as they could desire ; but Benjamin's mess was five times as plentiful as any of the others.

Before they left him Joseph commanded his steward to replace all his brothers' corn-money in their sacks, and to put his own silver cup in the top of Benjamin's sack. And the man did so.

The next morning, as soon as it was day, they left with their asses. They had scarcely got outside of the city however, before Joseph sent his steward after them to reclaim his drinking-cup. So the man followed them, overtook them, and asked them why they had rewarded his master evil for good in stealing his silver cup.

The brothers denied the theft indignantly, reminding the servant how honestly they had returned their former money ; and they declared that if the cup were found amongst them, they would all remain in Egypt as slaves to the mighty governor.

The sacks were opened and searched, beginning



with Reuben's and ending with Benjamin's. When the brothers saw the cup in the last sack they rent their clothes, reloaded their asses, and returned to the city.

When they were brought before Joseph, they fell on the ground.

He asked them how they had dared to do so wicked and ungrateful a thing.

Judah answered for all. He did not attempt any excuse, he simply said that they would all remain and be Joseph's servants.

This however the latter would not allow ; he said he would keep back the culprit ; but that the rest should return to their father.

Then Judah came forward and spoke most beautifully to Joseph, telling him how Jacob loved Benjamin because he was the only son left of his beloved wife ; how hard he had found it to part with him, even for a short time ; and how his very life was bound up in the lad's life. He said that if he saw them return without him he would die, and that they should then have brought down their father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Then he told how he, Judah, had given himself to Israel as surety for the lad ; and so he prayed Joseph to keep him in his stead as a bondman : " For," said he, " how shall I go up to my father and the lad be not with me ? "

*LESSON TWENTY-FIRST.*

## THE LOST FOUND.

THEN Joseph's tender heart could refrain no longer. He had tried his brothers' love for Benjamin, and also their repentance for their conduct towards himself, and he had found both real and true. Now nothing prevented his giving his heart up to the great joy that was ready for him.

He ordered all his Egyptian servants to leave the room, so that no stranger was present when he made himself known to his brethren. And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians, and even the household of Pharaoh, heard him. And he said, "I am Joseph, doth my father yet live?"

But the brothers could not answer him for terror and trouble at his presence.

Then gently he said, "Come near to me, I pray you."

And they came near.

Then he continued, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . . So now it was not you that sent me

hither, but God ; and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

“Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt ; come, and tarry not : and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, . . . and there I will nourish thee.

“And behold your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

“And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in the land of Egypt, and of all that ye have seen, and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.”

And then Joseph fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept ; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them. And then his brothers gained courage and talked with him.

Soon tidings of Joseph's happiness reached Pharaoh himself, and well pleased were he and his servants to hear of it. He joined in Joseph's invitation to his father and brethren, and sent word that waggons for the women and children, and food for the journey, were to be sent to Jacob with the brothers, and that they were to take what they pleased, for everything in the land of Egypt was at their disposal.

So Joseph sent asses laden with the good things of Egypt for his father and his brethren by the way. One parting word of advice he gave them, "See that ye fall not out by the way."

And so they came to old Jacob, in the land of Canaan, and told him that Joseph was yet alive, and governor over all the land of Egypt.

Jacob's heart fainted; for he believed them not. But when he saw the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him, his spirit revived.

And Israel said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

So he set forth, he and his sons, his sons' wives, and their children. Seventy persons in all they were; and they came with all their cattle and herds into Egypt.

And Joseph came as far as the land of Goshen to meet his beloved father. And he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

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*LESSON TWENTY-SECOND.*

## THE DEATH OF JACOB.

So Israel and his twelve sons dwelt in the land of Egypt. The land of Goshen, which lies just to the north of the Red Sea, was given up to them and their flocks.

And Joseph brought Jacob to Pharaoh ; and the aged patriarch blessed Pharaoh.

And the king asked him, "How old art thou?"

He answered, "The days of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years : few and evil have the years of my life been."

And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, with their households, during the whole time of the famine.

And after some time Joseph received tidings that his father was sick ; and he went at once to him, taking with him his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim, that they might receive Israel's blessing.

Joseph brought them to his father so that Jacob's right hand might rest on the head of Manasseh the elder, and his left on that of Ephraim. But Jacob crossed his hands, and laid his right hand on Ephraim ; and when Joseph tried to prevent him, telling him

that Manasseh was the elder, he answered, "I know it, my son, I know it : he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great ; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations."

And he blessed them both that day, and he said to Joseph, " Behold I die ; but God shall be with you, and bring you again to the land of your fathers. Moreover, I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

Then Israel assembled his twelve sons to receive his solemn blessing. Most grand and beautiful are the words in which that blessing was conveyed.

Judah, who had so faithfully and fearlessly fulfilled his pledge to his father concerning Benjamin, was called to receive the blessing of all blessings. His was to be the princely tribe, and the sceptre or kingdom was not to depart from it until Shiloh, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, should come.

When Joseph's turn came, it seemed as though earth could not satisfy his father for this most beloved of all his children ; for he proceeded from every good thing below to call down the abundance of the everlasting hills upon the head of him who was separate from his brethren.

He then solemnly charged his sons to bury him in

the land of Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah, with Abraham and Isaac, and gathering himself up in his bed, he died.

Joseph flung himself in his grief upon the face of the father whom he so loved, and from whom he was now indeed parted for ever on earth, and wept.

He caused his body to be embalmed, and, with Pharaoh's permission, he and his brothers took the body into the land of Canaan and laid it in the cave of Machpelah.

Joseph himself lived to see his grandchildren and their children. He died at the age of a hundred and ten, after making the children of Israel promise to carry his bones with them into Canaan when they returned thither.

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*LESSON TWENTY-THIRD.*

THE STORY OF JOB.

WE now come to the history of Job, a man who was not of the seed of Abraham, and therefore not one of God's chosen people. But his story is most minutely given us in the Bible; one of its holy books being en-

tirely devoted to him. It is written in the grandest poetry of the most ancient form of Hebrew, and most probably Job lived whilst the children of Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt.

He was, it is thought, a descendant of Esau. We are told that he lived in the land of Uz, which was the same as Mount Seir, or Idumea, the country of the Edomites, the descendants of Esau or Edom.

The life of Job has an interest quite apart and different from the lives of those of whom we have been learning. It shows us God's dealings with a righteous man not in covenant with Him, and teaches us most surely how those who trust and hold fast to God through affliction and sore trouble are certain to be blessed.

Job was a perfect man and an upright one, that feared God and hated evil. He was a great Eastern chief, possessing immense flocks of sheep, oxen, camels, and asses, with numbers of servants. He had also seven sons and three daughters.

And now we see how Satan, the old serpent, who tempted Adam and Eve, is allowed to use the power which their sin has given him. He is shown us as appearing before God and accusing Job of being good and faithful only because he was rich and prosperous. He declared that if Job's riches were taken from him he would curse the God whom he had hitherto served.



So Satan was permitted to try him, and to take from him all his worldly goods.

One day when Job's sons and daughters were all feasting in their eldest brother's house, his oxen and asses were taken by an armed band of Sabeans or fire-worshippers, who slew the servants in charge of them; lightning consumed his sheep and shepherds; whilst three bands of Chaldeans came and carried off his camels, also slaying those in charge of them. The three messengers who told Job these sad tidings had hardly left speaking when another made his appearance with far worse on his lips; for he told how a great whirlwind had arisen and had blown down the house in which Job's children were feasting, and had crushed them all.

But good patient Job bowed his head, and worshipped saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

But Satan's malice was not crushed. He declared to the Lord that had he been allowed to touch Job personally he could have driven him to rebellion. So the wicked one was permitted to afflict Job with a most loathsome form of leprosy, which covered him with sores from head to foot. And to double his sorrows, his wife fell as Eve had done into the snare of the serpent, and joined in tempting her stricken husband. She said, "Curse God, and die!"

But Job answered, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

But a harder trial yet was to come upon Job. Three of his friends, all of them descendants of Abraham, when they heard of his sorrows, came together to comfort him and to mourn with him.

He was so changed that they knew him not, and they lifted up their voices and wept; and they rent their mantles and sprinkled dust on their heads towards heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and spake not a word unto him; for they saw that his grief was very great.

At length Job poured forth his bitter complaint, wishing in the anguish of his heart that he had never been born.

Then his three friends spoke to him, each declaring that Job's goodness must have been hypocrisy; for that God would never have allowed a righteous man to be so afflicted. But he answered them each in turn, justifying himself, and declaring that he had committed no sin worthy of these terrible judgments. All their arguments could not shake his trust in the God whom he had always served; and one of the clearest prophecies of the resurrection in all the Old

Testament burst triumphantly from his suffering lips :—

“ I know that my Redeemer liveth,  
And that He shall stand at the last day upon the earth :  
And though after my skin worms destroy this body,  
Yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

But yet he could find no present rest or comfort ; for he could not understand how the justice of the Almighty could allow him to be so troubled.

And now another friend named Elihu, who had not yet been mentioned, spoke. He upbraided them all for trying to fathom the motives of the Most High, showing how inscrutable are the smallest of His works, much more then His dealings with man, the crowning work of creation. Towards the end of his speech, Elihu calls upon Job and his friends to listen to and adore the mighty voice of the Lord in one of those violent storms that arise so suddenly in Arabia, and which was even then bursting over them. When out of the whirlwind the Lord Himself spoke, showing Job his ignorance, and how utterly impossible it is for any created being to judge the actions of his Creator.

And Job humbly acknowledged his error and presumption.

And the Lord reproved the three cruel friends who had unjustly accused His innocent servant, command-

ing them to offer sacrifices lest He should chastise their folly.

And the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning, giving him double his first flocks of sheep, oxen, and camels. Then came to Job all his relations and acquaintance; and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him. Every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.

Seven other sons also were born unto him, and three daughters, Jemima, Kezia, and Keren-happuch. And in all the land were no women so fair as the daughters of Job.

And Job lived to see his grandchildren of the fourth generation, and died old and full of days.

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#### *LESSON TWENTY-FOURTH.*

### THE BIRTH OF MOSES.

MANY many years had elapsed since Jacob and his sons had journeyed from Canaan to Egypt. Joseph was dead, Pharaoh was dead, and there had arisen another king which knew not Joseph. He saw that

the children of Israel had multiplied, and increased marvellously, and he feared lest they should become more powerful than the Egyptians themselves. So he cruelly and wickedly ill-treated the poor Israelites, making them work hard. They were forced to make bricks, and their lives were made bitter with hard bondage. But the Lord protected His people, and they did but prosper the more under their affliction. So Pharaoh ordered that every boy born amongst the Israelites should be cast into the river Nile.

Shortly after this cruel command, a woman of the tribe of Levi had a son, a fair and beautiful child. She hid him three months, and when she found that she could do so no longer, she made a sort of basket of bulrushes, which she covered with pitch, and laying her babe therein, she placed the basket amongst the flags which grew on the broad river's brink. Then she placed his elder sister at some little distance to watch what would happen.

Just then the princess, Pharaoh's daughter, came down to the river to bathe. She saw the little ark of rushes and sent one of her maidens to fetch it. She opened it and beheld the fair child within ; and the babe, aroused from his slumber, wept. The princess had compassion on him, and seeing his sister, she sent her to fetch a nurse for him from amongst the Hebrew women. The girl ran and fetched her mother.

her Pharaoh's daughter gave the child, telling her to bring him up for her and she would pay her for it.

The happy mother took her babe, and called him "Moses," which means drawn out, because he was drawn from the water.

The child was afterwards taken to Pharaoh's palace, where the princess treated him as though he were her own son. And he grew up in all the wisdom and knowledge of the Egyptians, but his heart yearned towards his poor oppressed brethren the Israelites.

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### *LESSON TWENTY-FIFTH.*

## THE NAME OF GOD.

WHEN Moses was quite grown up, he went to the place where his poor Israelitish brothers were labouring in the hot Egyptian sun. There he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew; and he slew the man, and so delivered his oppressed kinsman.

Again on the next day he visited them, and this time he saw two Israelites quarrelling and fighting. He reproved them, whereupon the man who was in the wrong insolently asked who it was that had made

Moses a ruler over them, and whether he intended to slay him as he had done the Egyptian the day before ? Moses was astonished to find that the affair was known to any one. It was not however to end here. Soon Pharaoh heard of it, and sought to slay Moses ; and but that he escaped into the land of Midian, he would have done so.

The Midianites, amongst whom Moses now found himself, were descendants of Abraham and of Keturah, his second wife. Their priest Jethro had seven daughters, who took care of their father's flock. And Moses saw these girls bring their sheep to the well and draw water for them, but other shepherds came and drove them away. Moses fought for the oppressed here as he had done in Egypt, and he watered their flock for them. The girls came home to their father and told him of the stranger's kindness, whereupon he sent them to ask him to eat bread with them.

Moses remained with Jethro, taking care of his sheep for him ; and he married Zipporah one of his daughters.

Once, as he led his father-in-law's sheep to Mount Horeb in the desert, he saw there a bush burning ; but though the flames burnt fiercely, they did not consume it. Moses drew nigh to find out the cause of this great marvel, when from the midst of the fire came the voice of the Lord, saying, "Moses, Moses

He answered, "Here am I."

Then he was bidden not to draw nigh, but to take his shoes from off his feet, for that the ground whereon he stood was holy.

And the Lord said, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

And the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of the taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. . . . Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

Moses feared greatly when he heard that he was to go to Pharaoh and demand from him the Lord's people. He did not know what to say to the children of Israel; he could not even tell them the name of the God who had sent him.

Then the Lord revealed to His servant that awful Name which He had never yet made known to the sons of men—that Name which declares His eternal self-existence. He said unto Moses, "I AM THAT I AM." Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me. . . . I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites



. . . unto a land flowing with milk and honey. And they shall hearken unto thy voice : and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt ; and ye shall say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us : and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out My hand, and I will smite Egypt with all My wonders, . . . and after that he will let you go."

Still Moses feared to go : he said that the Israelites would not believe that the Lord had appeared unto him.

Then the Lord said unto him, "What is that in thine hand ?"

He answered, "A rod."

And the Lord said, "Cast it on the ground."

Moses did so, and immediately it became a serpent, before which he turned and fled. Then he was bidden to take it by the tail. At once he did so ; and lo ! again it was a rod in his hand.

Another sign of his mission God gave him. He bade him place his hand in his bosom. He did so, and when he took it out it was leprous and white.

Even yet Moses feared ; for he was slow of speech. But he was promised that his brother should meet h<sup>e</sup>

on the road, and accompany him to Pharaoh, so as to speak for him.

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*LESSON TWENTY-SIXTH.*

THE FIRST PLAGUES.

Aaron came by the divine command to Mount Horeb to meet his brother, and together they journeyed into Egypt. They delivered their message unto the elders of the children of Israel. And all the people, when they heard that the Lord had looked upon their affliction, bowed the head and worshipped.

Then the brothers presented themselves to Pharaoh, and said to him, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness."

But the king answered in his pride, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

And then, to punish the poor Israelites for their demand, Pharaoh gave orders that no straw should be given them to make the bricks which were their daily task: they were to make as many bricks as heretofore, and they were to find the straw for themselves.

Then indeed were Israel's poor children in an evil case. They could not of course complete their usual task whilst they were busy seeking for straw ; and when they presented themselves to the Egyptian task-masters with their work unfinished, they were beaten and told that they were idle.

They complained bitterly to Moses and Aaron, whose interference had, they thought, been the cause of their hard treatment.

And Moses laid the whole matter before his God.

Then the Lord said unto Moses, "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh : for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land. I am the Lord : and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the Name of God Almighty ; but by My Name JEHOVAH was I not known unto them. And I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have heard the groaning of the children, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage ; and I have remembered My covenant.

"Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you of their bondage ; and I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments : and I will take you

to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God : and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob ; and I will give it to you for an heritage :

“I am the Lord.”

This most gracious message did Moses deliver to the children of Israel ; but they hearkened not to him for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage. Then the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron to go before Pharaoh and repeat His former message to the hard-hearted king.

And they did so : Moses was eighty, and Aaron eighty-three years old when they spake to Pharaoh.

Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and it became a serpent ; but still the king hearkened not to them.

Then Moses was ordered to meet Pharaoh as he came out in the morning, and to stand on the brink of the Nile, and stretch forth the self-same rod over the waters of the river. And he did so ; and immediately they were turned into blood.

Aaron stretched forth the rod over all the streams, and ponds, and pools of Egypt, so that all the water in the land was turned into blood.

And the fish that was in the river died : and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river.

For seven days all the water in Egypt was turned into blood ; but still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he heeded not the judgment of the Lord.

Then again was Aaron bidden to stretch forth his rod over the river, and this time swarms of frogs came forth ; over all the land they came, into the beds, into the ovens, into the kneading troughs, into the king's own chamber they came : they covered the land of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh's proud heart, for the first time, quailed before the might of the God of Israel. He said, "Entreat the Lord, that He may take away the frogs from me, and from my people ; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord."

And so Moses cried unto the Lord. And the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields. And they gathered them together upon heaps.

But when Pharaoh saw that the plague was gone he hardened his heart, and refused to let Israel go as the Lord had said.

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*LESSON TWENTY-SEVENTH.*

## THE PLAGUES.

AGAIN the Lord ordered Moses and Aaron to stretch forth the rod in wrath over the land of Egypt. They did so, and immediately the dust of the earth was turned into lice, which covered both man and beast.

But Pharaoh's heart was hardened ; and he regarded not this fresh punishment.

Then Moses was told to bring another grievous plague on this unhappy land. He stretched forth his rod, and swarms of flies covered the whole land, excepting Goshen, the part where the Israelites dwelt. Then indeed Pharaoh saw that it was the Lord God of Israel who was afflicting him. He told Moses and Aaron to sacrifice to the Lord in the land. This however they could not do. The Egyptians worshipped a bull as the emblem of their chief god Osiris, and therefore it would be impossible for the Israelites to sacrifice the creature, which they ignorantly worshipped, before their very eyes. The Egyptians would have stoned them in their fury. Moses said that they must go three days' journey into the wilderness, and there offer sacrifice. To this Pharaoh gave his consent, pray-

Moses to entreat the Lord for him, that He would remove the flies from the land.

And Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord. And the Lord did according to the word of His servant, and removed the flies, so that not one remained in the land. But as before Pharaoh hardened his heart, and would not let Israel go.

Hitherto the punishment of the Almighty had only affected the land of Egypt; nothing living had been touched. Now however the cattle of the Egyptians were stricken. The Lord sent upon all their beasts a very grievous murrain, so that they died; but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.

According to the idolatrous belief of the Egyptians, their very gods were thus struck down by the Almighty Hand, but still Pharaoh's proud heart did but grow prouder and harder. He refused to let Israel go.

Then Moses was bidden to take handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and sprinkle them towards the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh. He did so, and now the Egyptians themselves felt the chastising hand: for men and beasts alike were covered with boils. Still however Pharaoh remained immovable. He would not let Israel go.

Then Moses was sent early in the morning to the king, to warn him that unless he let the people go he should indeed be struck down. He had only been

raised to his exalted position, that the Almighty power of the Lord might be fully shown forth in him to all the world. On the morrow would be sent over all the land, save and excepting the land of Goshen, such a storm as had never yet visited it. Yet even now, so great were the pitifulness and loving-kindness of the Lord, that the people were advised to fetch their cattle in from the field ere it was too late. He that feared the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the house : and he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field. Then did Moses stretch forth his rod toward heaven : and the Lord sent thunder and hail ; and the fire ran along the ground ; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote all that was in the field, both man and beast ; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail.

Then for the first time did Pharaoh show himself humbled. He sent for Moses and Aaron and said unto them, "I have sinned this time : the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat



the Lord, (for it is enough), that there be no more mighty thunderings," (or as it is in the Hebrew, *Voices of God*), and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer."

Moses promised that he would entreat the Lord, though he knew that as before it would be useless. He did so; and the thunder and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth.

And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, and the hail, and the thunder, had ceased, he sinned yet more; he hardened yet again his heart, and would not let Israel go.

Moses was now sent to threaten Pharaoh with the locusts if he persisted in keeping back the Israelites.

These locusts were a fearful visitation; they were a species of grasshopper, that were to be sent in such multitudes as to cover the earth, so that it would be completely hidden by them; and they were to devour everything green that the storm had left.

Then Pharaoh's servants begged him to let the people go: for they said that Egypt was destroyed. So he sent for Moses and asked who he wished to take to serve the Lord.

And Moses said that all, young and old, sons and daughters, must go and hold a feast unto the Lord.

But Pharaoh said that none but the men should go:

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and Moses and Aaron were driven forth from his presence.

Then the Lord commanded Moses to stretch forth his hand. He did so, and a strong east wind arose which blew all that day and all the following night. By the morning the wind had brought the locusts. Very grievous were they, as no locusts had been before them; for they covered the whole land so that it was darkened: and they eat everything which the hail had left, so that nothing green remained through all the land of Egypt.

Then again did Pharaoh send for Moses and Aaron in haste, and pray that his sin might be forgiven only this once, and this death of all things be taken from him.

So when Moses entreated the Lord, a strong west wind was sent, which took away the locusts and cast them into the Red Sea, so that not one remained.

But still Pharaoh's heart was hardened: he would not let Israel go.

Then Moses was again ordered to stretch forth his hand; and a thick darkness, a darkness which might be felt, was sent over the miserable land. For three days it lasted, and during that time the Egyptians saw not each other, nor did any one of them stir from his place: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

Pharaoh called for Moses, and said that the Israelites might go with their children, but that their flocks they must leave behind.

But Moses refused ; he said that not one of their cattle should be left behind : for that with them they must sacrifice to the Lord.

Then indeed was the wrath of Pharaoh aroused. He said, "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more : for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die."

And Moses calmly answered, "Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more."

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#### *LESSON TWENTY-EIGHTH.*

### THE LORD'S PASSOVER.

AND now the Lord called Moses and Aaron, and told them to mark well that month ; it was to be the first month of the year, the beginning of all months, to them. On the tenth day of that month, every Israelite was to set apart a lamb for himself and his household. The lamb was to be without spot or blemish, and was to be kept until the evening of the fourteenth day of

the month, when it was to be killed, and with a bunch of hyssop they were to strike some of the blood upon the door-posts. The lamb was to be roasted whole with bitter herbs; and they were to eat it standing, and ready prepared for a long journey. From the fourteenth to the twentieth day also they were to eat unleavened bread, and no work save that which was necessary was to be done amongst them. This feast was to be kept by the Israelites at the same time of year for ever, and was to be called, "The Lord's Passover."

For on that night, at midnight, whilst the Israelites feasted, the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle. Only those houses whose door-posts bore the saving blood of the lamb were spared. The angel of death passed over and harmed them not. In every other there was one dead.

And there was a great and bitter cry throughout the land of Egypt.

Then at last, and not till then, did Pharaoh send for Moses and Aaron at the dead of that awful night, and tell them to go at once, with all their people, and with their flocks and herds; and in the depth of his anguish he even implored them to bless him also.

The Egyptians, in their agony of fear, lent the Israelites everything that was necessary for a journey, and even more; for they gave them jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment.

So they started forth from the land in which they had been sojourners four hundred and thirty years: a very mixed and great multitude they were; six hundred thousand men, besides women and children; and large flocks and herds.

That night was ever to be held with solemn remembrance amongst the children of Israel as the night of their mighty deliverance; and every first-born son of man and beast amongst them was, in remembrance of it, to be set apart as holy to the Lord. They might redeem, or buy them back, with a sacrifice, but until this was done they belonged to the Lord, and to Him only.

So they set forth on their journey. If you look at a map of that part of the world, you will see that there was a short way from Egypt into Palestine, skirting the Mediterranean, most probably the way by which Jacob and his sons had come; but they were not allowed now to travel that road: for they would have had to pass through the midst of the Philistines, a brave and warlike people, descended from Ham, who would have found the poor timid Israelites, brought in slavery, an easy prey. So they were led by

Lord God to the wilderness which lies on the borders of the Red Sea.

The Lord Himself led them and went before them ; in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire, which was "a light to their feet and a lantern to their path," by night.

So they went, bearing the bones of Joseph with them, as their fathers had promised.

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#### *LESSON TWENTY-NINTH.*

### THE RED SEA.

No sooner were the Israelites fairly gone than Pharaoh and the Egyptians regretted that they should have allowed such valuable servants to slip out of their hands.

Pharaoh ordered that six hundred chariots, with captains over every one of them, should be made ready ; and with them he started in rapid pursuit of the Israelites, who, encumbered as they were with women, children, and cattle, could not have gone very far.

The children of Israel had encamped as we have seen close to the Red Sea ; they saw the Egyptians

advancing swiftly upon them, and in great fear and terror they cried unto the Lord. Upon Moses they poured forth bitter reproaches: they said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou thus dealt with us to carry us forth out of Egypt? . . . It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness."

But Moses, firm and strong, as one should be whose trust was in the Rock of Ages, said, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, . . . for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

Then, at the word of the Lord, he ordered them to march onward. And as they did so, he stretched forth his hand and lifted up his rod over the sea.

And the sea saw that mighty rod and fled; the waters also stood up as on an heap: for it brought a strong east wind, which so blew across the waters, that they stood up as a wall on either side, leaving a broad dry path in the midst.

Upon this path the Israelites entered boldly and fearlessly. And the Angel of God, in the pillar of cloud and of fire, moved from before the hosts of Israel, and placed Himself in their rear, between them and the Egyptians. It gave light to the former all through

that awful night, whilst to the latter it was a cloud of darkness and confusion, which kept them from coming up with the Israelites.

When the Egyptians came to the pathway through the waters they entered in, all of them ; but once inside, it seemed almost impossible to them to proceed. Their chariot wheels came off, so that the horses could scarce drag them along : and they heard strange sounds and noises ; for the Lord, from the pillar of cloud and of fire, was troubling the Egyptians.

At length in terror they said, " Let us flee from the face of Israel ; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians."

But it was too late. The Israelites were now safe on the farther bank ; and, as soon as they were so, God ordered Moses again to stretch forth his rod.

And Moses did so : and the sea returned to his strength, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh, so that there remained not one of them.

" Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians ; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore."

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*LESSON THIRTIETH.*

## THE SONG OF MOSES.—ANGELS' FOOD.

AFTER their mighty deliverance, Moses and his sister Miriam led the hosts of Israel in singing a glorious song of thanksgiving to the Lord who had so mercifully redeemed them. This song is perhaps the grandest poetry ever written, and very wonderful does it seem thus coming from the lips of one who, so short a time back, had been slow of speech.

Other difficulties however soon came upon Moses. He had to guide his great multitude through a barren rocky wilderness, where the only streams were mountain torrents, which rose and tore fiercely in the rainy season, but which soon dried up, leaving nothing but bare beds of rock burnt brown by the hot eastern sun. Nothing of any sort was there to nourish the multitudes who were destined to wander over this desolate wilderness so long, and who were to leave on the hard rocks themselves such incontestable evidences of their journey : for to this day are to be seen, carved on the sides of the precipices, representations of the horses and the Egyptian riders who perished in the waves under the Almighty hand.

The first water they found was at a place whos'

very name tells what a sore disappointment the brackish pool must have been to the thirsty wanderers : for it was, and still is, called Marah, which means bitterness. At once they murmured and complained to Moses who cried to the Lord for help : and he was shown a tree which he was bidden to cast into the waters. He did so, and the bitter was made sweet.

From Marah they came to Elim, a beautiful oasis of date palms and soft green grass, springing up round twelve springs of fresh clear water. There they encamped and rested.

They had now reached the wilderness of Sin which is between Elim and Sinai. Here there was food of no sort whatever ; and as at Marah the Israelites lost courage and faith ; they reproached Moses and Aaron saying, " Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, . . . for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Then a new and wonderful miracle was wrought for these murmuring people.

Aaron was bidden to call all the congregation together, and while the glory of the Lord shone upon them from the cloud, God said unto Moses, " At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God."

And so it was. At even a flight of quails came up and covered the whole camp, so that the Israelites had meat in plenty; and in the morning, when the dew was dried off the earth, there remained upon the face of the wilderness a small round thing, as small as the hoar-frost on the ground.

And the children of Israel wondered when they saw it, and said one to another, "What is it?"

And Moses answered them, "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat."

And when they tasted it, they found it sweet and pleasant. Then Moses told them that each man was to gather every morning sufficient for his household during the day. They were to take no more than was sufficient, for each day the supply would be renewed; only on the sixth day of the week they were to collect a double quantity, for on the Sabbath, the day of rest, there would be none.

Some of the people disobeyed this command, and gathered more than the daily supply; but all that had been saved for the second day was useless, for it bred worms and smelt.

The children of Israel called this heavenly food, Manna. And for forty long years they were fed on this which may well be called "angels' food."

*LESSON THIRTY-FIRST.*

## THE SMITTEN ROCK.

AGAIN the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron. In the rocky wilderness were no water springs, and in their thirst the Israelites came to Moses, saying fiercely, "Give us water that we may drink. . . . Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our cattle with thirst?"

Then Moses cried to the Lord for help. And God told him to take his rod and strike the rock in Horeb. He did so, and at his touch, from the hard stones there came forth streams of pure clear water, so that both man and beast slaked their thirst freely.

After this the Amalekites, a people descended from Esau, attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses deputed Joshua, a man of the tribe of Ephraim, to choose out men and lead them to battle in the valley, whilst he stood on the hill above with his rod in his hand.

Joshua, whose whole history is a perfect pattern of the obedient, fearless, duty-loving soldier, obeyed; and Moses, with Aaron and Hur, stood on the top of the hill.

When Moses stretched forth his hand the Israelites prevailed, but when he dropped it the Amalekites had the upper hand. But Moses' hands grew heavy; so Aaron and Hur placed a stone for him to sit on, whilst they on either side sustained his failing hands. And thus Joshua utterly discomfited the Amalekites.

And here God declared to Moses that his people should battle with Amalek from generation to generation, until he was utterly destroyed.

Here also we are told that Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, hearing how God had blessed and redeemed Israel, came to meet him, and brought with him Moses' wife and two sons, whom he had left in the land of Midian.

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### *LESSON THIRTY-SECOND.*

## THE LAW.

THREE months after the Israelites had left Egypt they reached the foot of Mount Sinai, and there they encamped.

Moses ascended the mountain, and there the Lord called to him, bidding him say to the house of Israel, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and

how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people : for all the earth is Mine : and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."

So Moses came down, and laid before the elders of the people the Lord's words. And they all answered and said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

Then Moses returned with this answer, and the Lord said unto him, "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever."

And by God's command, Moses told the people to sanctify themselves, and wash their clothes, and make themselves ready ; for on the third day the Lord would come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. Not a living thing of any sort was to touch the mountain on that day : whosoever did touch it, whether man or beast, would most surely die.

And on the third day, in the morning, there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick flame on the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud.

And Moses brought the people forth to meet their God, and they stood behind the mountain. It was full of smoke ; for the Lord Himself had descended on it in a flame of fire. The smoke ascended like the

smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked, as the sound of the trumpet waxed louder and louder.

Then the Lord spoke in the hearing of all His people those ten commandments which are delivered to us afresh every Sunday in church, and which are the eternal laws of right and wrong. They had not been given to Abraham and Noah when God established His covenant with them, for these holy men were a law unto themselves. Now however the Israelites had become so corrupted by the sins and idolatries of the Egyptians, that they had lost even the knowledge of righteousness, so that these laws were indeed necessary for them. And all the people heard that mighty Voice, and the thunderings and the noise of the trumpet; and saw the lightnings and the quaking smoking mountain; and they feared exceedingly, and they removed and stood afar off.

And they said to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

But he answered, "Fear not; for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not."

So the people stood afar off, whilst Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

This was the fourth covenant between God and

man. The Israelites were to obey the whole law, and God would on His part give them the land promised to Abraham.

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### *LESSON THIRTY-THIRD.*

#### THE TABERNACLE.

FURTHER laws and rules were now delivered to Moses by God for the government of the Israelites as His own peculiar people; laws for their temporal welfare coming from the Lord their King, as well as laws for their spiritual welfare coming from the Lord their God.

Then were Aaron and his sons Nadab and Abihu, together with seventy of the elders of Israel, called up with Moses into the mount; and there, in sight of the glory of the Lord, did they partake of a most solemn feast, and worship the God of Israel.

Strengthened by that food Moses went up still farther on the mount, into the very midst of the cloud and thick darkness. Joshua, the brave and obedient, he left on watch where they had feasted, whilst the elders returned to the camp; and to Aaron and Hur Moses gave the charge of the people during his absence.



For forty days and forty nights was Moses in the cloud which rested on the top of Mount Sinai—a cloud which, to the eyes of the Israelites below, was like a devouring fire.

There he was instructed by the Lord Himself in all matters concerning the worship and faith of His people.

They were to build a movable temple or tabernacle, in which to worship the Lord during their journey; and even the minutest particular concerning the size, form, and ornamentation, of this wondrous tent were dictated to Moses with the most careful exactness. There was to be firstly an oblong court, formed by pillars with curtains between them. At one end of this court was to be the Tabernacle itself, constructed in the same manner as the court of hangings or curtains between pillars.

The Tabernacle was to be divided into two parts; the holy place, and the holy of holies. Into the latter only the high priest whom God would choose to Himself was to enter. In it was to be placed the ark of God. This was to be a box made of shittim or acacia wood, overlaid with pure gold, and having golden cherubim on either side, whose outstretched wings overshadowed the top of the ark or mercy-seat. On this mercy-seat the glory of God would be revealed to Moses and to the high priest. The holy of holies was

to be divided from the holy place by a veil embroidered with purple, scarlet, and blue.

In the holy place were to be the golden altar of incense, the seven-branched candlestick, and the table of shew-bread. Into this part of the Tabernacle the priests might enter.

Without, in the court, was to be the great brazen altar of sacrifice, and the laver wherein the priests washed. Here all the tribe of Levi were to minister to the Lord.

Such was to be the Tabernacle, built after the express pattern of the court of heaven itself: and surely, when we remember how minutely the Almighty ordered all, even the smallest particulars connected with it, we shall think no trouble too great, no expense which we can afford too much, to adorn and beautify Christian churches, which are so much more His than any Jewish temple ever could be.

Another order was delivered to Moses concerning this building;—that those, and *only* those, who gave or contributed to it willingly and from their hearts, were to be permitted to give at all.

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*LESSON THIRTY-FOURTH.*

## THE GOLDEN CALF.

MOSES was next ordered to set apart Aaron and his sons as priests unto the Lord, to minister in the Tabernacle. Aaron was to be the high priest, and the form and colour of his garments were most minutely dictated to Moses.

Aaron and his sons were alike to have ephods of fine white linen; but over this the high priest was to wear another ephod of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, with a girdle of the same. This upper dress was to have a beautiful robe of blue, with a border of pomegranates round the bottom, and between each pomegranate was to be a bell of pure gold. On his head was to be a mitre of fine linen, bearing over the brow a golden plate, with the words, "Holiness to the Lord" engraved on it. The most glorious part of Aaron's dress was however to be his breastplate. This was to be formed of twelve precious stones, one for each of the tribes of Israel. These stones were to be set in rows of three, and each one of them was to be engraved with the name of one of the tribes. The whole breastplate was to be fastened by rings and chains of gold to Aaron's shoulders and to the girdle of his ephod. He was thus to bear the names of all the children of Israel

on his heart whenever he appeared before the Lord as their great high priest and intercessor.

This breastplate also contained the mysterious Urim and Thummim, by which the Lord communicated His will to His priests.

These beautiful garments were to be put upon Aaron and his sons. Aaron himself was to be anointed with oil, and they were to offer a sacrifice, after which they, their garments, and the altar, were to have part of the blood of the sacrifice and of the anointing oil sprinkled over them. Thus were they to be made holy to the Lord, they and their sons ; and their sons' sons, who were to succeed them in the priestly office, were to be sanctified in the like manner.

I am sure you must see how clearly all these ceremonies point to the One Anointed, Whose blood cleanses *all* from sin, and Who bears us all on His heart before His Father's throne of grace.

And the Lord appointed Bezaleel of the tribe of Judah, and Aholiab of the tribe of Dan, to construct the Tabernacle, saying that He had given them of His spirit and wisdom to make them wise unto the work.

In the meantime the Israelites in the camp below began to grow angry and impatient at the continued absence of Moses. They came to Aaron and, with the remembrance of the awful law delivered to them still fresh in their minds as it must have been, they asked

him to make them gods after the fashion of the idols of Egypt. And Aaron weakly yielded to this faithless people. Out of their gold earrings and ornaments he made them a calf like the bull-god Apis; and the people worshipped the creature, declaring that it had brought them out of Egypt.

So the Almighty in His wrath declared that He would cast off the whole nation, and fulfil his promise to Abraham in Moses alone.

But Moses entreated the Lord for this poor sinful people, and won mercy for them. He came down from the mount, bearing in his arms two stone tables, on which were the Ten Commandments engraven by the finger of God Himself. He found the faithful and obedient soldier Joshua immovable at his post, astonished at the noise below, but never thinking of deserting his watch to inquire into the cause of it.

When Moses came in sight of the shameful spectacle—the calf, and the Lord's people dancing round it—in his indignation he threw the stone tables from his hands and broke them. Then, taking the calf, he burned it in the fire and ground it to powder, and mixing the powder with water, he made the sinful people drink it. He then armed the tribe of Levi, and sent them through the camp to slay, and execute the wrath of the Lord upon their brethren. Three thousand fell thus by the sword.

He lastly made a solemn confession of their sins to the Lord, even offering himself as an atonement for them. But the Lord refused him, saying that they who had sinned should bear their own punishment; concluding however with the gracious promise that the Angel of His presence should not depart from them.

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### *LESSON THIRTY-FIFTH.*

## THE VISIBLE PRESENCE.

MOSES took the Tabernacle out of the camp, defiled with idolatry, and pitched it at some distance without. There he entered into it, and the cloudy pillar, the sign of the immediate presence of the Most High, descended in the sight of all the people. Here it was, the Bible tells us, that the Lord “spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend.”

Moses even prayed that God would show him His glory. But this might not be even to one so pure and devoted as Moses; for he was told that no mortal man might see God and live. But he was permitted to remain hid in a cleft of the rock, whence he might behold the outskirts of the awful glory for which he longed.

He was then told to hew two fresh tables of stone like unto the first, and with these in his hand, to repair to the top of the mount.

A second time did Moses spend forty days and nights without food on the summit of Sinai, where he engraved on the stone tables the Ten Commandments of the law. At the end of that time he descended with them to renew the covenant betwixt the Lord and His people.

But the glory of the Presence on the mount had so rested on Moses that his face shone, and dazzled Aaron and the Israelites—dazzled them so much that he was forced to cover his face with a veil whilst he spoke to them.

Moses proceeded to follow all the directions given to him concerning the Tabernacle, the priests, and the priestly garments.

The men and women of the congregation alike gave freely and willingly their jewels, their ornaments, and their goods, for the service of their God, and the women spun diligently at the cloths and vestments. All that were able toiled at the great work; and when it was completed Moses set up the Tabernacle according to the directions given him in the mount, anointing Aaron and his sons to be priests holy to the Lord.

Inside the ark were placed the tables of stone; and when it was all set in order, we are told that the cloud

covered the Tabernacle, and that the glory of the Lord filled it—filled it so that not even the favoured Moses could enter into it.

From that time forward the Presence rested on the Tabernacle, a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Only when the children of Israel were to continue their journey was that marvellous cloud raised to guide them onwards.

When it moved, the priests took up the ark, and marched forward at the head of the hosts of the Lord, chanting the glorious opening words of the sixty-eighth Psalm—

“Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered;  
Let them also that hate Him flee before Him.”

When the first sacrifice was offered on the great brazen altar in the court of the Tabernacle, there came a fire from the Lord which consumed it. When the people saw this they shouted and fell on their faces.

Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's eldest sons, disregarded this fire from heaven, and dared to present themselves in the Tabernacle with strange fire in their censers. For this act of impiety they were devoured by a fire from the Lord, so that they died there before Him; and their kindred were forbidden even to mourn for them, thus marking the Lord's jealous care for the honour of His sanctuary.



*LESSON THIRTY-SIXTH.*

## THE NUMBERING.

WE now come to the numbering and marshalling of the children of Israel.

God commanded Moses to take each tribe separately and number all its fighting men ; that is all those who were above twenty years of age. He was then to place them under the command of the leading man of the tribe.

All the sons of the children of Jacob were to be thus numbered excepting the sons of Levi ; these, with Aaron and his sons at their head as priests, were reserved as holy to the Lord for the service of the Tabernacle. They were to be God's own instead of the first-born son of every child of Israel, as had been arranged on the night of the first passover.

To each family of the tribe of Levi was given some particular office in the tabernacle. To one was given the charge of the holy vessels, to another the care of the hangings, and so forth. . Only Aaron and his own sons could assume the peculiar offices of the priesthood ; these were to belong to them, and to their descendants after them.

The number of the tribes was to be made up to

twelve by counting in the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, thus fulfilling the double blessing of Jacob.

When each tribe had been marshalled under its leader, its place in the camp and on the march was assigned to it.

The Tabernacle guarded by the Levites was always pitched in the midst of the host. It was flanked on the east by the lion of Judah, and on the west by the men of Ephraim, the descendants of Joseph the well-beloved. Next to Judah on the east came Issachar and Zebulun; close to Ephraim on the west were Manasseh and Benjamin.

To the south of the Tabernacle were the tents of Jacob's first-born Reuben, while next to them were Simeon and Gad.

On the north was Dan with Asher and Naphtali.

On the march each tribe was marshalled under the banner of its chief.

At this time the Israelites kept their second pass-over, thus marking that a year had elapsed since their delivery from the bondage of Egypt.

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*LESSON THIRTY-SEVENTH.*

## THE PUNISHMENT OF UNBELIEF.

AGAIN the children of Israel murmured. They loathed we are told the heaven-sent food, the manna provided for them by their God.

They longed for meat, and even wept for the fish and fruits of Egypt. Whereupon the Lord promised them meat, meat indeed to the very utmost of their hearts' desire, and that not for one day or two, but for a whole month. Even Moses, when he heard this wondrous promise, asked whence was to come the flesh sufficient to feed for thirty days these six hundred thousand men.

And there came a wind from the sea bringing with it quails, even as a former wind had brought the locusts into Egypt. These birds fell in immense quantities in and around the Israelitish camp, so that the people were two days and one night gathering them in.

But even as they eat came the fierce anger of the Lord against the people who had so dared to despise His heavenly food.

While the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against

the people, and He smote them with a very great plague.

Soon after this they reached the wilderness of Paran, which was at the south of the Promised Land. There Moses was bidden of the Lord to send forth spies, one of each tribe, to search out the resources of the land. These men searched it from the south to the north. They saw Hebron, where their father Abraham, to whom the whole land had been given, once lived. They beheld the fair country, with its smiling valleys and cornfields, its hill-sides rich with the vine and the olive. They beheld, too, its cities, fenced and walled, and the mighty and gigantic sons of Anak who dwelt in them. They saw these wondrous men, and straightway their faithless and coward hearts melted within them for fear. They plucked one bunch of grapes from close beside the brook of Eschol; so large and so heavy was it that no one of them could carry it, so they placed it on a staff, and two of them bore it back to the camp. They also brought figs and pomegranates.

On their return they detailed the glories and beauties of the country to their brethren; but they added that these good things were not for them, for that the giants, the Anakims, were stronger than they, and would most surely destroy them.

Loud was the voice of weeping and wailing through-

out the camp that night, loud the murmurs against Moses and Aaron, and many the wild wishes that they had died in the land of Egypt—nay, even in the very wilderness itself.

At length the faithless host determined to choose them out a captain who would lead them back to their Egyptian bondage.

At this two of the spies, Joshua the brave soldier of the tribe of Ephraim, and Caleb of the tribe of Judah, exhorted them not to give way to useless fears, but to trust to the Lord Who had so mercifully led them and borne with them, and Who would most assuredly fulfil His promise, and give them this fair land flowing with milk and honey; for how could even the mighty Anakims stand before those whose defence was the Lord of Hosts.

Their words did but drive the multitude to fury, and they turned upon them with stones.

In the midst of this fearful tumult the glory of the Lord appeared in the Tabernacle of the congregation. Again did the Almighty call upon Moses to inherit in his own person the blessings promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and again did the intercession of Moses win mercy for his people. *Only* this mercy would be shown to their children. *None* of the generation born in Egypt should enter into Canaan. They whose hearts had continued hard and faithless, spite of t<sup>h</sup>

miracles and wonders wrought on their behalf, should perish in the wilderness, where they were to continue wanderers for the space of forty years. The faithful Joshua and Caleb alone, of the six hundred thousand grown up men who had left Egypt, should enjoy the Promised Land.

No sooner had the people heard their doom than their obstinacy and rebellion led them to declare that they would go in and win the land for themselves. But the Amalekites and Canaanites who dwelt on its borders fell on them, and the hosts which had been so victorious at Rephidim found that their strength was gone from them. They were discomfited and driven back to the wilderness.

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### *LESSON THIRTY-EIGHTH.*

### THE REBELLION.

MOSES' next trouble with his people was a matter of rebellion—a crime so dreadful in the sight of God that it was punished by the death of a large number of the host.

A man named Korah, of the tribe of Levi, together

with three others—Dathan, Abiram, and On, of the tribe of Reuben—disputed the authority of Moses and Aaron, saying, that they took too much on themselves, that the whole congregation was holy, and that there was no reason why Moses and Aaron should set themselves up above the rest.

Moses did not attempt to defend his own position. He merely told these rebels that God would decide whether he had taken too much on himself. He told Korah, and all those who had joined him, to bring incense, and to unite with Aaron and himself in offering to the Lord. God would then show plainly whom He had called to Himself.

Moses particularly upbraided Korah for his conduct. He was a Levite, and as such he and his family were allotted a special service in the sanctuary. Instead of thankfulness for this honour they had showed anger at not being placed higher, even in the place of Aaron himself.

Moses also sent special messengers to Dathan and Abiram, telling them to join the company of Korah, which amounted to two hundred and fifty men, in offering to the Lord.

They however flatly refused to come. They reproached Moses and Aaron with having lured the whole congregation into the wilderness with promises of a land flowing with milk and honey, a land of fields

and vineyards, and of having failed in these promises, insomuch as he proved himself incapable of leading them to this goodly land : and now, said they, was he going to assume the authority of a prince among them ? No, they would not come up.

The next morning Korah with his two hundred and fifty men, each holding his censer, placed himself in the door of the Tabernacle.

The glory of the Lord shone forth, and all the Israelites were ordered to separate themselves from the company of Korah.

Dathan and Abiram were summoned to the door of their tent, with their wives and their children ; and then, with a mighty throe, the earth opened her mouth, swallowing these audacious sons of Reuben alive with their whole families, and closing quickly over them, whilst, at the same moment, came fire from the Lord which destroyed Korah and his men.

Their censers were however holy, for they had been presented before the Lord ; therefore they were beaten out into plates, and used to cover the altar of sacrifice.

At first the Israelites fled with horror and fright ; but on the morrow they broke forth into fresh murmurs, saying that Moses and Aaron had slain the people of the Lord.

At this God smote them in His wrath with a fearful plague, which was only stayed by Moses making an



atonement for them with incense, and by his standing with his censer between the living and the dead. Fourteen thousand were struck by it and died.

In order to prevent any repetition of rebellion, each chief of a tribe was ordered to bring a rod on which his own name was written. The twelve rods were then to be placed in the Tabernacle, and the rod of the man chosen of God would bud and blossom.

This was accordingly done ; and on the morrow Aaron's rod had budded, blossomed, and borne almonds, thus plainly showing the choice of the Lord.

This rod was kept in the Holy of Holies as a continual warning against the sin of rebellion.

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### *LESSON THIRTY-NINTH.*

## THE SIN OF MOSES.

WE now come to the very saddest part of Moses' life. He had been born, as you remember, under sentence of death, but had been saved by Pharaoh's own daughter. He had then lived for forty years in all the comfort and style of an Egyptian prince. His next forty years had been spent as a shepherd on the slopes

of Sinai ; and then had come that wondrous time when he led the Lord's people, and during which God had continually spoken to him face to face, "as a man speaketh to his friend." Glorious poet, mighty warrior, wise statesman and lawgiver as he was, he was now, for one little act of disobedience, to lose the reward to which he had looked through all these long years of endurance and trial.

The Israelites had reached Kadesh, a place in which there was no water. As usual, they murmured against Moses and Aaron, reproaching them with having brought them forth from the land of Egypt. Moses and Aaron cast themselves before the Lord in the Tabernacle. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them ; and Moses was bidden to take Aaron's rod, and SPEAK to the rock in the face of all the people : it would then give forth water, so that they and their cattle might drink.

Moses took the rod from before the Ark. He and Aaron then summoned the whole congregation together, and Moses spoke to them in his wrath, forgetting and going beyond the commandment of the Lord.

He said, "Hear now, ye rebels ; must we fetch you water out of this rock ?" Then, lifting up his hand, he *smote* the rock twice.

And the water came pouring out abundantly ; so that the people and their cattle drank.

But now came the sad, sore punishment. Because they had *struck* the rock, instead of *speaking* to it, as God had told them, they would never enter the goodly land to which they were journeying. They would lead their people to its borders, but they themselves would never enjoy it.

As Adam lost Paradise for one act of disobedience, so Moses and Aaron, the saints of the Lord, lost Canaan through another. Oh! may we lay this lesson well to heart, and earnestly seek from God an humble and obedient spirit!

The children of Israel were now drawing towards the close of their long wandering. If you can possibly do so, look at a map of their journeyings. You will there see that the northern part of the Red Sea divides itself into two arms, leaving a barren, rocky, triangular piece of land between them. This was the wilderness of Zin, in which the Israelites had now been wandering for thirty-eight years. Kadesh was some distance to the north of the right arm of the Red Sea, and just at the south of the land of their hopes, the lovely land of Canaan. To enter it however they must needs cross the territory of the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, from whom you know the sea derived its name of Red.

Moses sent a supplicating message to this people, begging to be allowed passage through their border.

He reminded them in most moving terms that Israel was "their brother." He spoke of the long trials and hardships that they had come through, and promised that in crossing the land they would keep strictly to the high road, paying for what they eat, and even for the water that they drank.

But to all this their brother Edom turned a deaf ear, and even drove them by main force from his border.

This must have been a cause of much discouragement to the poor Israelites. If you glance again at the map, you will see that Mount Seir (the mountains of Edom) stretches right away to the north of the right arm of the Red Sea. They would therefore have to journey all the way round these mountains, and come up on the other side, to the east of the Jordan and of the Dead Sea.

Just at this time too to add to their troubles Aaron died. The sentence which had been passed against Moses at the waters of Meribah (or strife) extended to him also; for he had shared that act of disobedience.

Moses was told to take Aaron and his eldest son Eleazar, and to go with them up into Mount Hor. He was then to take off Aaron's beautiful priestly vestments and place them on his son, who was to be anointed High Priest in his stead.

This Moses did; and when the change had been

effected Aaron died. And the people mourned for him thirty days.

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*LESSON FORTIETH.*

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

Soon after the death of Aaron, the Israelites were attacked by a Canaanitish nation who tried to bar their passage ; but they conquered and overcame them with the help of their God.

Spite however of this victory, the faithless people were much discouraged by the length of their journey round Mount Seir ; and again they murmured against the Lord and against Moses, complaining of the length of the way, the shortness of water, and against the manna, saying that their "soul loathed this light bread."

This time their punishment was indeed a fearful one. The Lord sent fiery serpents among them which bit the people, and many of them died.

At this dreadful punishment they repented and came to Moses, saying, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee ; pray unto the Lord that He take away the serpents from us."

And Moses prayed for the people.

And now the Almighty ordered to Moses a wondrous remedy for this stricken people. He was to make a copy of one of the fiery serpents in brass, to place it high on a pole, and all the bitten Israelites who gazed at it would be cured.

Moses constructed this brazen serpent, and those who had faith to gaze on it were cured.

At length they passed the long range of Mount Seir. The land began to get greener and more fertile around them. Sweet flowers were springing up, and each day revealed new beauties which must indeed have been refreshing to those who had grown up amidst bare and rocky deserts.

When they came near the eastern bank of the Jordan, they sent a message to the King of the Amorites, who ruled over that part, asking permission to journey through his territory, promising not to touch or injure anything on the way.

Instead however of granting their request, he gathered his people together and came out against them; but the Israelites conquered them utterly, and took possession of all their towns and villages.

Another Canaanitish king—Og, the giant of Bashan—they treated in the same way, taking possession of his towns and destroying his people, so that none of them were left.

This last victory brought them quite close to the

Jordan, with a people called the Moabites close to them on the south.

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*LESSON FORTY-FIRST.*

BALAK AND BALAAM.

My closing words in our last lesson told you of a people called the Moabites, who were just to the south of the Israelites. Their king was named Balak, and both he and his people feared lest the Israelites should do to them as they had done to the Amorites—that is, conquer and destroy them utterly.

So Balak sent messengers right away into Mesopotamia, the country you remember from which Abraham had come, to a prophet named Balaam who dwelt there.

The history of this man Balaam is one of the saddest in all the Bible. He was a true prophet, inspired by God, and yet the love of gain and riches led him to try and ruin the people of God, and he even died in fighting against them.

Balak sent messengers to this man Balaam with large presents and rewards, begging him to come and curse the Israelites; for he knew that the curse of a prophet of the Most High God would most assuredly prevail.

When the messengers arrived, Balaam requested them

to stay all night, that he might have time to hear the will of God. In the night the Lord appeared to him, and forbade him to return with the Moabites, also telling him not to curse the Israelites, for they were blessed.

When Balak heard of Balaam's refusal, he sent other messengers, princes more honourable than the first, who were to offer great riches and grandeur to the prophet if he would but come and curse the Israelites.

But Balaam told them that if they were to offer him his house full of silver and gold he could not go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do less or more. He begged them however, as he had done the first messengers, to remain all night ; and during the night he won permission to accompany them, though he was forbidden to speak any words save those taught him by God.

Accordingly in the early morning Balaam mounted his ass and accompanied the elders of Moab. He had by his importunity obtained permission to do that which was good neither for his own soul nor for the people of God.

One last and most wonderful warning of the evil of his course was given to him. As he rode along in a narrow walled road between two vineyards an angel of God stood straight in the way, with his sword drawn to bar the passage.



The ass saw the angel though Balaam did not, and she turned aside into the field ; whereupon her master punished her, and brought her back into the road. The poor beast, afraid to pass the heavenly messenger, then threw herself against the wall, and in so doing hurt Balaam's foot, and again he punished her.

The angel now moved farther down and stood in a very narrow place, where there was no room to turn either to the right or to the left.

Then the ass, overcome with fear, fell down under her master, who this time struck her with his staff.

Another marvel was now wrought for the sake of the perverse prophet. The Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she spoke, saying, "What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times ?"

Then Balaam's eyes were opened, and he saw the angel standing in the way, his drawn sword in his hand. He too feared at that sight, and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.

And the angel said to him, "Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times ? Behold I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me."

Balaam answered, "I have sinned, for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me ; now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again."

And the angel said, "Go with the men, but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak."

So Balaam went with the princes of Moab.

And Balak the king led the prophet to high places, whence he could see the tents of the Israelites. At each place he built seven altars, offering on them seven rams; but each time the curse which he had been summoned to speak against the people of the Lord was turned into a full and glorious blessing.

Balak wrathfully bade him return to his own country, saying, "I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast altogether blessed them these three times."

Balaam then broke out into a prophecy and blessing which far exceeded any previous one, and which at last burst forth into a full promise of the "Desire of all nations," the Saviour who would one day come from Jacob, the Seed first promised to Adam and Eve. He said—

"I shall see Him, but not now;  
I shall behold Him, but not nigh:  
There shall come a Star out of Jacob,  
And a Sceptre shall arise out of Israel,  
That shall smite the corners of Moab,  
And destroy all the children of Sheth."

That which Balaam had not been able to contrive by

cursing, he however taught the Moabites to do in another and far more deadly way.

They mingled amongst the Israelites, and led them into deadly sin, into joining them in the impure worship of their idol Baal-Peor. Such sin was this, that their punishment was a plague which destroyed twenty-four thousand of them.

Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the high priest, stayed this fearful visitation by killing one of the chief offenders. And Moses was bidden to arm himself for the last time of his life, and to lead this people forth against the Midianites.

And they utterly discomfited their enemies, slaying five of their kings, and also Balaam the perverse prophet, who was with them.

After this battle, the land which had thus been conquered on the east of the Jordan, was given by Moses to the two tribes of Reuben and Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, on condition that they should establish their wives and children there, whilst they themselves were to assist their brethren in conquering the goodly land beyond the Jordan.

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*LESSON FORTY-SECOND.*

## THE DEATH OF MOSES.

WHEN Moses numbered the people before leading them to his last battle, not one who had left Egypt as a grown man was to be found amongst them save and except the two faithful spies Joshua and Caleb. A new generation had sprung up braced and strengthened by the trials and endurances of the wilderness, very different to their fathers who preferred the land of bondage with its luxuries to Canaan with the struggles that must be made to obtain it.

They had now reached the end of their long wandering. Nothing separated them from the Promised Land but the river Jordan. Moses, knowing that he was to go no farther with them, appointed heads or princes to each tribe who were to divide the land when once they had obtained possession. He told them that Levi was to have no portion like the rest, but that each tribe was to give the Levites cities to dwell in, so that they might be distributed over the land.

The number of the tribes was as I have told you to be kept up to twelve by taking the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, as heads of tribes, thus fulfil-

ling the double blessing which Jacob had given to his favourite son.

Moses now assembled all the people together and spoke to them for the last time ; and surely we may imagine how earnestly they must have listened to those parting words of their great leader, who had borne with their sins and rebellions so long and so patiently, and who was even now preparing to endure the grievous punishment which his own outbreak of temper at their continued faithlessness had brought upon him.

He rehearsed to them all their own sinfulness and shortcomings, together with God's long-sufferings and mercies towards them during those forty years. Then he went on to repeat to them the law which had been given to their fathers amidst the lightnings and thunders of Sinai. He next told them of the mercies which would be shown to them if they obeyed it truly, and of the sore and dreadful punishments which would fall on them if they were disobedient. These threatenings are the most wonderful of all prophecies : for they minutely describe events which did not take place for more than fifteen hundred years, and they portray the ways and habits of a nation not even called into existence for more than a thousand.

After giving his blessing to the faithful Joshua who was to succeed him as leader of the host, he broke forth into a glorious song, the poetry of which is to this

day unrivalled, and which he concluded with his blessing on the twelve tribes, a blessing which is but a fuller repetition of that of Jacob.

We now come to the last scene in the history of this most wonderful man. At the age of a hundred and twenty, in full possession of all his natural powers ; for we are told that "his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated," he climbed up Mount Pisgah a height on the further side of Jordan, there to behold the goodly land and die.

And he saw it, its smiling valleys, its olive trees, its rushing streams, its vineyards and its mighty mountain fastnesses ; God showed them all to him from the heights of Nebo.

And there alone with the God who had treated him as a "friend," speaking with him face to face, he died—

"And no man knows his sepulchre,  
And no man saw it e'er ;  
For the angels of God upturned the sod  
And laid the dead man there."

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*LESSON FORTY-THIRD.*

## THE WATERS OF JORDAN.

AFTER the death of Moses God renewed his call to Joshua son of Nun, telling him to take charge of all the people, and to lead them to take possession of the entire land of Canaan from Mount Lebanon to Euphrates, from the Jordan to the Great Sea, or as we call it the Mediterranean.

The blessing which Moses had already given him was then renewed. God said to him, "I will be with thee, I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage."

Joshua's first proceeding was to send two spies over the Jordan to reconnoitre the town of Jericho which stood just on the other side.

These men made their way across and came to the house of a Canaanitish woman named Rahab. The king of Jericho however heard of them, and sent to inquire after them, but Rahab hid them under some flax which was on the roof of the house; and when the king's messengers had departed she let them down out of a window of her house, which was built on the town wall, to the plains outside. She first however begged them to spare her and her father and mother,

her brothers and sisters, when they took the city, as she knew they would shortly do. This they promised and departed, leaving with her a line of scarlet thread to bind in her window, that all the Israelites might recognise her house and spare it.

When the spies had returned to Joshua, he made preparations to cross the Jordan. He bade all the people sanctify themselves : for the Lord God would work a mighty wonder on their behalf on the morn.

And on the morrow Joshua told the priests, whose office it was to bear the ark, to carry it before the hosts and to go straight into the waters of the Jordan. "And it shall come to pass," said he, "as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above ; and they shall stand up upon an heap."

As he had said so it was done. The priests bore the ark before the people, and with a faith and obedience that were truly great marched straight into the flowing tide. As their feet touched the water its flow was stayed, and the bed of the river lay bare and dry before them.

All the host crossed over, and then twelve chosen men, one out of each tribe, took every one a great stone from the midst of the river, and carried it up on



the bank, where they were all placed by Joshua's command as a sign and remembrance to their children for ever of this mighty miracle.

The priests bearing the ark then came out of the river, and the waters returned to their place as before.

The Israelites crossed the river just above its mouth, where of course its waters were broadest and deepest, and in the time of harvest when its springs were so full that it overflowed all its banks.

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*LESSON FORTY-FOURTH.*

THE FALL OF JERICO.

THE whole multitude of the Israelites was now encamped in the plains before Jericho, where they kept the Passover, eating unleavened bread made out of the corn which they found around them. Here too Joshua caused the whole host to be circumcised : for this rite had been neglected with those born in the wilderness.

From this time the manna ceased. They had reached the land of plenty which God had promised ; so the heavenly support now no longer needed was taken from them.

In the meantime the gates of the city were tightly closed against them, and within them all the people of Canaan, who had heard of the miraculous passage of the Jordan, feared and trembled because of them.

One evening as Joshua was near the walls of Jericho a man stood suddenly before him, with a drawn sword in his hand.

Joshua went up to him and asked him, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?"

He answered, "Nay, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I come."

Then Joshua fell on his face and worshipped, saying, "What saith my Lord unto his servant?"

And the great Captain said, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot: for the place whereon thou standest is holy."

And Joshua did so.

The Lord then told His servant that Jericho which lay walled, fenced and strong before them, was already given into their hands, and He delivered to him all instructions as to how he was to take possession of it.

According to these orders, the next day early in the morning the host commenced its march. First came the armed men of Israel; then seven priests bearing trumpets of rams' horns which they blew continually; next came the ark of God, and after it priests again

blowing with trumpets. To the people was ordered perfect silence.

In this manner they marched around the town once and then returned to their tents.

For six days following, this extraordinary march was performed.

On the seventh day instead of marching round Jericho once, they did so seven times; and *then* Joshua said to his people, "Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city."

So the people shouted with a great shout, and even as they did so the strong walls before them fell flat, and the way into the fenced town lay open.

And they slew all in the town, men and women, young and old, save and excepting Rahab and her friends, whom they brought safely out of the place.

The city itself they burnt, with everything in it but the gold, silver, and iron, which they kept for the house of the Lord.

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*LESSON FORTY-FIFTH.*

## THE TAKING OF AI.

THE next place which Joshua attacked was the small town of Ai. It was so insignificant that he sent but three thousand men to subdue it. To his grief and dismay however the men of Ai routed and discomfited his soldiers, and then chased and pursued them for some distance.

Joshua prostrated himself before the God Who had promised that He would never leave or forsake him, to inquire the meaning of this sad defeat; and he was told that sin had brought the disaster upon the host.

One of the children of Israel had kept back for his own use some of the spoil of Jericho, and until he was punished, and sin cast out from them, the Lord their Strength would no longer fight for them. Lots were cast through the whole camp by which first the tribe and family of the offender were discovered, and at length his person. He was Achan of the tribe of Judah.

Most gently and lovingly did Joshua urge him to confess his guilt, saying, "My son, give I pray thee glory unto the God of Israel, and make confession

unto Him ; and tell me now what thou hast done ; hide it not from me."

And Achan did glorify his God by a full and free confession. He had coveted and taken goodly garments and gold from the sacking of Jericho ; and they were even then hid under his tent.

There they were found as he had said ; but he and his family, and even his cattle, were stoned to death ; and afterwards their very remains were burnt, so urgent was Joshua to cast sin out of the camp.

Another attack upon Ai was now organised, and this time it was perfectly successful. Joshua planted thirty thousand of his men in ambush behind the city, whilst with the rest he made an attack upon it which was at once repulsed by the king of Ai at the head of his men. The Israelites turned as though in flight, whereupon the men of the town pursued them hotly ; and when they were well away, the Israelites in ambush entered into the open and defenceless city, and set it on fire. The two armies then closed in upon the Canaanites and killed every one of them, concluding their victory by hanging the king himself upon a tree.

This victory enabled Joshua to fulfil a command of Moses delivered during his last discourse to the people ; for it brought them to the two mountains Ebal and Gerizim, which now lay before them. According to the word of Moses, Joshua built an altar to the

Lord, then placed one half of the tribes on Mount Ebal, and the other half on Mount Gerizim; after which he proceeded to read aloud to them the law delivered on Mount Sinai, whilst the tribes stationed on Mount Gerizim called down blessings on those who should keep it, and those on Mount Ebal curses on its breakers. On the stones of the altar erected were engraven the words of the law.

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*LESSON FORTY-SIXTH.*

THE FIGHT AT MAKKEDAH.

THE Canaanite inhabitants of a town called Gibeon, hearing how Joshua had destroyed their neighbours of Ai and Jericho, determined to make him their friend. They dressed themselves in soiled and torn garments, putting old shoes on their feet. They placed on their asses old sacks containing dry and mouldy bread, together with wine bottles of old patched leather.

Thus they presented themselves to Joshua, saying that they had come a long journey from a very far country to meet the Israelites the servants of the

Lord, and to make a league of peace with them. They declared that their old bread was hot and new when they started forth, that their wine bottles were full, and that their garments had been worn and frayed on the road.

Joshua readily entered into the desired league, and promised to aid and defend these people.

Three days after this compact he discovered his mistake. The people whom he had believed to come from afar were his near neighbours. He might not, however, depart from his oath of protection; only as a punishment for their deceit these Gibeonites were made servants, the hewers of wood and drawers of water for the tabernacle and congregation.

The greatest battle of Joshua's life was fought in defence of these people. Five Canaanitish kings banded together to punish the Gibeonites for their alliance with the Israelites. These cowardly people appealed to Joshua for help; and he with his warriors and his mighty men came to them at once.

The fight on that day was indeed a wondrous and a glorious one for Israel; for their God fought visibly for them. As they slew and chased their enemies down the slopes of Beth-horon, a shower of immense hailstones was rained from heaven upon them; "and they were more which died with the hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

And more marvellous still, when Joshua saw that the daylight would pass away before he could utterly rout the foe, he prayed to the Lord ; and he was empowered to stay the sun and moon in their course, so as to prolong the day till the victory should be complete.

The five kings meantime fled and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah. Thither Joshua pursued them, and caused them to be brought to him from the cave. They were the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. He then humiliated them before the armies of Israel, and caused them to be hung on five trees.

After this, Joshua made an expedition to lake Merom quite in the north of Canaan, and fought the tribes round lake Chinnereth which you already know as the Sea of Galilee. These people joined themselves to the more northerly tribes, and Joshua gave them battle on the shores of lake Merom, and routed them, utterly destroying them and everything that they possessed.

He next attacked and conquered the tribes to the south. The Anakims too, the giants who had so frightened the ten faithless spies, Joshua destroyed, leaving none of them save a few who dwelt in the Philistine towns on the south-western shore.

And thus Joshua took the whole land ; and his people rested.



*LESSON FORTY-SEVENTH.*

## THE DEATH OF JOSHUA.

JOSHUA was now growing an old man ; and it became his duty to divide the conquered land amongst the tribes of Israel.

Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh had, as you must remember, already received their inheritance on the further side of Jordan, although their fighting men dutifully and faithfully assisted their brethren to subdue the remainder of the inheritance. The other half tribe of Manasseh was settled, together with Ephraim, in the very centre of the land. The best and fairest portion of that goodliest of all lands was thus given to the children of Joseph, in obedience to the will of his father Jacob.

To the south of these came the hilly portions of Judah and Benjamin, in the former of which were the old and already sacred cities of Jerusalem and Hebron. Farther south, between them and the desert, was the inheritance of Simeon ; and the narrow border of Dan separated them from the Great Sea.

To the north of Ephraim came the tribes of Zebulun, Naphtali, and Issachar, embracing the part now so well known to us by the name of Galilee,

whilst between these and the sea was a long narrow strip which formed the portion of Asher.

To the very north of all was a small corner afterwards taken possession of by Dan.

After this division Joshua dismissed Reuben, Gad and the half Manasseh to their own portion beyond Jordan, charging them to love the Lord, to keep His commandments, to cleave to Him, and to serve Him with all their hearts and souls. He then blessed them, and sent them away, with their own share of the spoil taken from the enemy.

The brave and faithful soldier then assembled all the tribes to meet him at Shechem. There he rehearsed to them all the wonders and mercies wrought on their behalf by their God since He had called them out of the land of Egypt. He then solemnly called upon them to choose between the service of the Lord and that of the idols of the Canaanitish nations around them.

They all answered, "We will serve the Lord."

Then, as a witness of this vow, Joshua caused a great stone to be set up under an oak tree, which was close to the Tabernacle.

After this Joshua died at the age of a hundred and ten, leaving behind him the example of a perfect soldier, implicitly and fearlessly obedient in his youth, and therefore thoroughly competent to command when called upon by God to do so.

*LESSON FORTY-EIGHTH.*

## THE THEOCRACY.

JOSHUA was gone, and shortly after him died Eleazar the son of Aaron ; but still the elders of each tribe who, under Joshua, had led the people to possession remained ; and during their lifetime the Israelites seem to have kept in a great measure to the covenant which they had so solemnly renewed before the death of Joshua.

Still we catch glimpses of dreadful evil. We hear of an Ephraimite named Micah, who used teraphim or images as aids to his devotions, and who even induced a Levite to live with him and assist him in this sinful worship, a direct violation of the second commandment.

We are also told of a most fearful outrage committed by some men of the tribe of Benjamin on Levite travellers who were passing through their territory. This dreadful violation of the sacred laws of hospitality was judged to be so shocking that the Benjamites were summoned to deliver up the offenders to justice. They fiercely refused, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar asked counsel of the Lord. He was ordered to lead the rest of the tribes to battle against Benjamin. In

the fight which ensued, twenty-five thousand men of Benjamin were slain. The remaining six hundred fled to the rocks.

The Israelites even took an oath not to give any of their daughters in marriage to the remaining Benjamites. Their hearts failed them, however, at the thought of thus cutting off a tribe from Israel, and they agreed to allow their brethren to steal for themselves wives from amongst their daughters.

Benjamin seems never to have recovered this dreadful slaughter : for we hear to the end of the smallness of "little Benjamin."

It was whilst the brave old Caleb was yet alive that Judah conquered from the Canaanites still in their border their two great cities of Jerusalem and Hebron. He does not however seem to have taken possession of the strong fortress of the former ; *that* did not fall into their hands till some hundred years later. From Hebron Caleb drove out three of the giant children of Anak who still remained there.

These good times however were not to last long. The generation born amidst the miracles and trials of the wilderness, and trained under the watchful eye of Moses, died out, and another generation arose "which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works He had done for Israel." *They* fell away grievously from their father's covenant, and served the Canaanitish idols.

Then God in His anger allowed their enemies to conquer and oppress them, till in their distress they repented and cried to Him for mercy. He then raised up judges among them who with the Almighty aid delivered them from their oppressors. And during the lifetime of their judge the Israelites in some measure kept to the Lord their Deliverer; but after his death they fell back into their own wicked ways.

This state of things lasted for about four hundred years, during which time the Israelites were indeed honoured; for their God Himself was their King, and their judges received their orders from on high.

In our next lesson I will endeavour to give you some account of these judges, and of the doings of their people.

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*LESSON FORTY-NINTH.*

OTHNIEL, EHUD, AND SHAMGAR.

THE first people whom God summoned to punish the Israelites for their idolatry came from afar off, from the country of their father Abraham. They were from Mesopotamia, and they oppressed the Israelites eight years.

And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, He raised up for them a deliverer—Othniel, Caleb's nephew and son-in-law.

And under Othniel the land had rest forty years.

At his death however the Israelites again fell back into their evil courses, and this time the Lord delivered them into the hand of Eglon king of the Moabites, who were descendants of Lot. He with the help of the Ammonites and Amalekites subdued the Israelites, and reduced them to a servitude which lasted eighteen years.

Then again "they cried unto the Lord in their distress," and a deliverer was sent them from the tribe of Benjamin. His name was Ehud, and, like most of his fierce and warlike tribe, he was left-handed. He was made the bearer of a present sent by the children of Israel to their conqueror Eglon king of Moab. Before he started on his mission he provided himself with a two-edged dagger, which he hid under his garments upon his right side.

On his arrival he, with the bearers of the present, was ushered into the presence of Eglon, who was a very fat man. They presented their gifts and departed; but instead of returning home with the others, Ehud came back to Eglon and said, "I have a secret message to thee, O king."

At this announcement all Eglon's attendants were

sent out ; and Ehud remained alone with the king in a summer parlour which Eglon kept for his own private use.

Then Ehud said, "I have a message from God unto thee."

At these solemn words Eglon rose to his feet ; and Ehud with his left hand drew the dagger from his right side, and smote the king so that he died.

He then locked the door of the chamber and escaped ; and before the confused Moabites had well discovered what had happened, Ehud fell upon them with the armies of Israel, and after slaying ten thousand of them he entirely subdued them.

Under Ehud the land had rest for eighty years.

The next people who were allowed to conquer Israel were the Philistines, their bravest, fiercest, and most dangerous enemies. They dwelt on the southern border of Canaan, between Simeon and the Great Sea, and they seem to have desired to take entire possession of the whole land instead of merely oppressing the people, as did the other Canaanites.

Shamgar son of Anath was in this instance called to be their judge. He slew six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad, and so delivered his people.

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*LESSON FIFTIETH.*

## DEBORAH AND BARAK.

WHILST the Israelites on the south-east were tormented by the Philistines, the Lord sold those on the north-east into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan. He for twenty years oppressed the children of Israel.

At this period a woman named Deborah, a prophetess, was called to judge Israel. She dwelt under a palm-tree in Mount Ephraim, and thither the people used to come to her for judgment.

When the oppression of Jabin was at its height, Deborah sent for a man called Barak of the tribe of Naphtali, and commanded him in the name of the Lord to take ten thousand of the children of Naphtali and Zebulun, and go towards Mount Tabor to the north of the Sea of Chinnereth. There he would meet Sisera the captain of Jabin's army, who would be delivered into his hands.

Barak seems to have been fearful about the matter : for he said, "If thou wilt go with me, then will I go : but if thou wilt not go with me, then will I not go."

Deborah answered, "I will surely go with thee ; notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not



be for thine honour ; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hands of a woman."

So Barak and Deborah went up together at the head of the ten thousand men of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Now there was a man named Heber, a Kenite, a descendant of Jethro the father-in-law of Moses, who dwelt in those parts. This man told Sisera that Barak had gone with his fighting men to Mount Tabor. Thither Sisera followed him with his army and nine hundred chariots of iron. He was however utterly discomfited, and all his hosts and his chariots fled before Barak who slew them even as they fled. Sisera himself escaped to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite.

Jael came out to meet him, and begged him to come into her tent and rest.

And he came in and laid down, and she covered him with a mantle. He asked her for water to drink, and she gave him milk.

Then he told her to stand in the door of the tent, and if any one inquired of her whether any of the fugitives were in her tent, she was to say "No."

Sisera was weary with hard fighting and flying before his foes, and soon he fell fast asleep.

Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent and

a hammer, and drove the nail right through his temple into the ground beneath, and so he died.

Soon after came Barak, hot in pursuit of Sisera. Him too did Jael come forth to meet; and she said, "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest."

And when he came into her tent there lay Sisera dead, with the nail through his temples, delivered as Deborah had said into the hand of a woman.

And Barak and Deborah sang a most beautiful psalm of praise and thanksgiving to God their Deliverer, in which they rendered glory to the Lord of hosts, the giver of all victory.

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*LESSON FIFTY-FIRST.*

GIDEON.

AGAIN the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord called upon the land the robber hordes of the Midianites and Amalekites.

These Midianites were, as I have told you, the Arab descendants of Abraham and his second wife Keturah. They were as the very grasshoppers for multitude.

They came up with their camels, their cattle, and their tents, and spread themselves on the whole face of the land, driving the unfortunate Israelites into the dens and caves and fortresses of the mountains. After seven years of this sore oppression, the Israelites again cried unto their God for help.

Now there was a young man of the tribe of Manasseh whose name was Gideon. As he was one day thrashing wheat close to a winepress an angel of God appeared to him ; but Gideon knew him not for an angel.

The angel said to him, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." And he told him to go forth to rescue his country from the Midianites : for the Lord would be with him.

Gideon begged his visitor not to depart till he had brought him a present ; and returning to the house he brought out a kid, with broth and a cake, and presented it to the angel.

The angel told him to lay them upon a rock close by, and when Gideon had done so he touched them with the end of his staff ; and there arose fire from the rock which consumed the flesh and the cakes. And the angel departed.

Then Gideon feared greatly, and he said, "I shall die because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face."

But the Lord said unto him, "Peace be unto thee : fear not, thou shalt not die."

Gideon then by divine command overthrew an altar to Baal the idol of the Phenicians, which belonged to his father, and cut down the grove of trees near it. He next sent messengers throughout the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, summoning their fighting men to meet him. And they came at once.

And now Gideon asked the Lord for a sign that he was the man called by Him to deliver the nation. He said, "If Thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as Thou hast said, Behold I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth, then shall I know that Thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as Thou hast said."

And early on the morrow he rose up and wrung out the fleece which he had placed on the ground; and from it there came a bowl full of water.

Yet again Gideon asked a sign of the Lord. He said, "Let not Thine anger be hot against me and I will speak but this once, . . . Let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew."

And so it was that night: the fleece alone was dry, whilst the ground around was wet with dew.

Then Gideon knew indeed that he was the chosen of the Lord. He rose up early, and pitched his tent to the south of the host of the Midianites.

And God told him that his army was too great a

one: for the Israelites would think that their own power and their own strength had delivered them, and so forget the Lord their Saviour. So Gideon was ordered to issue a proclamation, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead."

After this twenty-two thousand of the people returned to their own homes, leaving behind them a force of ten thousand. Still these were too many; so Gideon was told to take them down to the water and cause them all to drink. Those who took up the water to drink in the palms of their hands were to be set on one side, whilst those who bent down on their knees to lap from the brook were to be on the other.

Only three hundred had drunk from the brook. And the Lord said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you and deliver the Midianites into thine hand; and let all the other people go every man to his place."

That same night by the divine command Gideon and his servant went down to reconnoitre the hosts of the enemy who lay all along the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number like the sand of the sea. Gideon crept down in the darkness to the outside of this huge army, and there he heard one man telling his dream to another: he said—

"I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley tumbled into the hosts of Midian, and came unto a tent and smote it that it fell, and overturned it that the tent lay along."

And his companion answered, "This is nothing save the sword of Gideon son of Joash : for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all his host."

And when Gideon heard this dream and its interpretation he worshipped ; and returning to the hosts of Israel he called upon them to arise : for the Lord had delivered into their hands the host of Midian.

He divided his three hundred men into three companies, and gave to every man a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and lamps inside the pitchers. Then placing himself at their head, Gideon commanded his men to follow him and to do as he did, to blow their trumpets when he blew his, and to shout "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

They set forth and reached the hostile camp at about midnight, when the watch or sentinel had just been changed. They arrived upon them unseen and in total darkness : for you remember their lamps were hidden in their pitchers. Then suddenly from the midst of the darkness they blew their trumpets and broke their pitchers, letting the light of the lamps within blaze forth upon their enemies ; and shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

And the whole host started up in fear and terror and fled. And in their confusion they fell upon each other, not knowing friend from foe. Then Gideon called up all his fighting men and pursued them. And he took two of their princes, Oreb and Zeeb, and slew them.

And under Gideon the country had forty years of peace.

But after his death the old ingratitude of the Israelites again showed itself. They remembered not the Lord their God, nor yet showed they kindness to the house of Gideon who had done so much for them.

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### *LESSON FIFTY-SECOND.*

## JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

AFTER Gideon's death his son Abimelech treacherously made himself master of Israel by the slaughter of all his own brethren. He obtained his power by violence, and so he lost it: after three years the people rose in revolt against him, and he was slain in attacking a tower or strong place: a woman from

above threw a piece of mill-stone down on his head and broke his skull.

After him Tola, of the tribe of Issachar, judged Israel twenty-three years. He was succeeded by Jair, a Gileadite, who judged the people twenty-two years.

And again the children of Israel did grievous evil in the sight of the Lord. They served Baal and Ashtaroth the gods of the Zidonians ; and also the gods of Moab, of Ammon, and of the Philistines, so that for their sins they were delivered into the hand of the Philistines on one side, and the Ammonites on the other ; and in this sore strait the people were for eighteen years, till their misery drew them again to the God Whose laws they had so faithlessly broken.

Jephthah, a Gileadite, a mighty man of valour, was called to rescue his people from the Ammonites on the east. Some messages passed between him and his enemies ; and then we are told that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went forth to fight them. Before starting however he vowed a solemn vow that whatever first came forth from his doors to meet him on his return in peace should be offered up in sacrifice to God.

Jephthah was perfectly victorious. The Lord delivered the children of Ammon into his hand ; and he defeated them with a great slaughter. And as he returned home his daughter, his only and beloved child,



came out to meet him with joyful and triumphant dances. Jephthah's triumph was indeed turned to sorrow, and his joy into mourning : but he does not seem even to have thought of breaking his rash vow, and indeed his daughter herself urged him to fulfil it.

For some time it was the yearly custom of the Israelitish maidens to mourn for the daughter of Jephthah four days.

Jephthah judged Israel six years. And after him came Ibzan, a Bethlehemite. Then came Elon, a Zebulonite, who was judge for ten years. And after Elon, Abdon judged the people for eight years.

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*LESSON FIFTY-THIRD.*

SAMSON.

WHILST Jephthah was subduing the Ammonites on the north-east, another and very different person was raised up to defend the backsliding Israelites from the Philistines on the south-west.

Samson was the son of Manoah, one of those Danites who had remained in the south, and who were therefore on the Philistine border. Before his birth his

mother, who had hitherto had no children, was told by an angel that she would have a son. He was to be a Nazarite, dedicated to God from his birth ; his head was therefore never to be shaved, nor was he to touch wine or any strong drink. This was in obedience to the ceremonial law given to the Israelites in the wilderness.

The first thing we are told of this wonderful man after he had reached man's estate is that he married a Philistine wife, and that on his way down to the place where she lived a lion came out against him. Samson was entirely unarmed, but he slew him as easily as he would have done a kid. After this his wife was taken from him by her own people, and given to a Philistine like herself. For revenge Samson burnt down the corn, vineyards, and olives belonging to the Philistines, and smote them hip and thigh. The cowardly Israelites, afraid of bringing upon themselves the fury of their enemies, bound Samson with new cords, and delivered him up to them. Suddenly when he was in the midst of his enemies, and they were shouting at him in scornful fury, he burst his cords, and with the jawbone of an ass which he found at hand he slew no less than a thousand of them.

After this Samson suffered a Philistine woman whom he loved to beguile from him the secret of his great strength,—that it lay in his hair, which by

divine command, had been unshorn from his birth. This woman treacherously betrayed his secret to some of her own people, who surprised him asleep, and cut off all his hair. Samson awoke to find himself defenceless and shorn indeed, both of hair and strength.

His enemies now took him, put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza their chief city, where they threw him into prison, and bound him with brazen fetters. Some time after this the lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to their fish-god Dagon, and to rejoice over the capture of their mighty prisoner. And they sent for Samson to deride him and make sport of him.

Samson, whose hair had been growing in his captivity, and who was therefore fast regaining his strength, asked the boy who guided his steps to lead him to the pillars of the temple, that he might lean on them. He took hold of the two pillars between which he stood, and, with one wild prayer for help, he bowed himself forward with all his might; and under that giant strength the pillars gave way, and the whole house fell, crushing beneath its weight alike Samson and the three thousand Philistines who were there assembled.

Thus ended a life and strength which seem to us to have been so sadly wasted and thrown away. Samson

had ruled Israel twenty years, and those whom he slew at his death were more than those whom he slew in his life.

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*LESSON FIFTY-FOURTH.*

E L I.

As we have seen, at the time of Samson's death the Israelites had wandered very far from the paths marked out for them. They had worshipped at the shrine of almost all the Canaanitish idols, and the mere knowledge of the truth seems almost to have faded from amongst them. The Philistines were struggling hard to gain entire possession of the land, and when Samson was gone they seem fast to have gained the upper hand. Still the Tabernacle continued at Shiloh, and there the priests faithfully offered the daily sacrifice. The high priest at the time I speak of was named Eli. He was a very good old man; but he had suffered his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, to grow up in great wickedness unpunished.

In the days of Eli there lived an Ephraimite named Elkanah, who used to come up to the Tabernacle to worship and sacrifice every year according to the law.

Elkanah had two wives, one of whom had several children, whilst the other, Hannah, whom he dearly loved, had none. Hannah grieved much at this; and when she accompanied her husband to Shiloh, she prayed to the Lord, telling Him all her sorrow. And she wept as she prayed, her lips alone forming the words; for her voice seemed choked within her. So she prayed and offered a solemn vow, that if the Lord would but grant her a son he should be devoted to the service of God all the days of his life—a Nazarite, his head untouched by razor.

Now Eli the high priest watched her as she prayed, her lips only moving; and he spoke reprovingly to her, thinking that she could not speak because she had been drinking wine.

But Hannah answered him humbly and meekly, saying that she had taken no wine nor strong drink, but that she had been pouring out her soul before the Lord.

Then Eli blessed her, saying, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him."

So Hannah went home comforted.

And the Lord did indeed grant her petition; for she shortly after became the mother of a son, whom, in the fulness of her joy and thankfulness, she called "Samuel," or "Asked of God."

With her husband's consent, Hannah brought Samuel to Eli whilst he was yet a little child, telling him that she had lent him unto the Lord for so long as he lived. And Samuel served God in the Tabernacle, wearing a linen ephod.

We have in the Bible Hannah's beautiful song of thanksgiving ; it is even placed amongst the Psalms of David.

But the two sons whom Eli had spoilt in their youth continued so wicked, that at length God sent a messenger to tell their father that they should be both of them cut off in their sins : they would be taken both in one day, and all his race henceforth should die in misery, and in the flower of their youth.

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*LESSON FIFTY-FIFTH.*

SAMUEL.

SAMUEL, as he grew up, ministered to the Lord in the Tabernacle. And the Word of the Lord was very precious in those days : there was no open vision.

One evening, when Eli and Samuel were both laid down to sleep, God called Samuel.

And he answered, "Here am I;" and he arose and ran to Eli, who had, as he thought, called him.

But the high priest said, "I called not; lie down again."

Soon the call was repeated, and again Samuel arose and came to Eli, saying, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

Then Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child: therefore he said, "Lie down, and it shall be if He call thee, that thou shalt say, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'"

So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And again the Lord called, "Samuel, Samuel."

And obediently the child answered, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

Then was repeated the awful doom upon the house of Eli, a doom which might not be purged away with sacrifice nor offering for ever; for Eli's sons had "made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

And Samuel lay still until the morning, fearing to tell old Eli his vision. But the high priest called him, and commanded him to reveal to him every word of the message. And humbly and meekly the old man, when he had heard it, answered—

"It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good."

And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and let none of his words fall to the ground, so that all Israel knew him to be a prophet of the Lord.

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*LESSON FIFTY-SIXTH.*

THE ARK OF GOD

SOME time after Samuel's call the Philistines and Israelites fought a pitched battle, in which the latter were entirely beaten, and four thousand of them were slain.

Then in their despair the people sent for the Ark of God that they might take it into battle with them, thinking that with it they were certain of victory, and forgetting that victory could only come with the blessing of Him of Whose Presence the Ark was a sign.

Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, brought the Ark into the camp; and the people received it with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

And when the Philistines heard the shout, and knew wherefore the Israelites had shouted, they feared greatly; for they said, "God is come into the camp."

And they said, "Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the



Hebrews as they have been to you; quit yourselves like men, and fight."

And the Philistines did fight; and Israel was smitten with a great slaughter: for thirty thousand of them fell that day. The Ark of God also was taken; and Hophni and Phinehas were among the slain.

Now Eli sat on a seat by the wayside, watching tremblingly for news of the Ark. He was now a very old man, ninety-eight years of age, and blind. And a messenger, a Benjamite, ran out of the army with the woful tidings, having his clothes rent, and ashes on his head. And when the man told the sad news in the city, the whole population cried out with dismay. And Eli, from his post by the gate, heard the noise of the crying, and asked, "What meaneth the noise of this tumult?"

And the messenger answered him, "Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the Ark of God is taken."

When Eli heard that the Ark had fallen into the hands of the heathen Philistines he fell back from his seat, and in falling broke his neck, so that he died.

In the meantime the Philistines had carried the Ark to Ashdod, one of their chief cities, where they placed it inside the temple of Dagon, their fish-god.

The next morning they found their idol fallen, lying flat on its face before the Ark of the Lord.

They raised it, and set it in its place again.

On the day after, Dagon had not only fallen, but his head and hands were broken off, so that only his fish-body remained.

And then, as these warnings were not sufficient, the Almighty sent a grievous plague amongst the people of the town.

At length the lords and chief men amongst the Philistines met together, and determined to send away the Ark to another city named Ekron.

But here the same deadly plague followed the presence of the Ark, till the very heathen priests and diviners advised the people not to harden their hearts against the Lord, as Pharaoh of Egypt had done in the time of the plagues, but to send back the Ark to its place with an offering to the God of Israel.

They settled to send it back in a cart drawn by two cows whose calves were to be taken from them. If the cows of themselves left their calves, and took the Ark back to the Israelites, it would be surely known that their grievous visitations came from on high. They did so; and the kine took the straight way to the Israelites, going along the highway, and lowing piteously as they went, but turning neither to the right hand, nor yet to the left.

And some men of Israel who were in the fields reaping their harvest saw the Ark returning in this wonderful manner, and rejoiced to-meet it. But some of them irreverently looked into it, and were slain for their presumption.

So they feared ; and they sent the Ark to Kirjath-jearim, a city of Judah.

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*LESSON FIFTY-SEVENTH.*

SAUL THE SON OF KISH.

SAMUEL the prophet judged Israel all his life, going year by year in circuit through the towns of the land. And when he was old, he made his sons judges over Israel, but they followed not in the ways of their father ; they gave not righteous and true judgment. And all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel, and asked him to give them a king to rule them, and lead them to battle like the nations around them. This displeased Samuel greatly : for hitherto God Himself had been their King, ruling His people by the mouths of His prophets and judges. Thus the Israelites were preferring an earthly king to

the Almighty God. But God told Samuel that their desire should be granted ; only he must show the people beforehand how the king that they longed for would treat them.

So the prophet called the Israelites together and warned them that their king would oppress them, even as the heathen kings around them oppressed their subjects ; that he would take their sons and their daughters to be his servants ; that he would take the best of their fields, their vineyards, and their olive-yards ; and also the tenth of their sheep, and themselves to serve him. And, said Samuel, "Ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear you in that day."

But the people refused to hear the voice of Samuel : they said, "Nay, but we will have a king to rule over us."

And the Lord said to Samuel, "Hearken unto their voice and make them a king."

Now the man whom God had chosen to be king was a Benjamite named Saul, the tallest and handsomest man amongst all the tribes. His father Kish had sent him with a servant to seek for some asses which had strayed. Saul could not find the asses, and at length he determined to consult the seer Samuel as to where they could be.

When he arrived at the town where Samuel was, he found that a public feast was to be held that day, at which the prophet was to preside ; and he hastened to see him before the feast. And Samuel would not suffer him to depart, but kept him, and placed him in the place of honour, giving him the choicest morsel of food, which had already been reserved and put aside in anticipation of his coming. He told him also that his asses were found.

The next morning when Saul was about to depart, Samuel stopped him at the entrance of the city, and taking a vial of oil, he poured it over his head, and kissed him, and told him that the Lord had appointed him to be captain over His inheritance. Samuel then sent him home, telling him that at the hill of God, close to the garrison of the Philistines, he would meet a company of prophets ; and that there the Spirit of the Lord would be poured on him, and he would prophesy and become a changed man.

And so it happened. Saul met the prophets, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, another heart was given to him, and he prophesied. Then Samuel called the people together at Mizpeh, the heap of stones raised as a witness by Jacob and his father-in-law Laban, when the former departed with his wives, his children, and his cattle to return to his own home. There the aged prophet spoke to them sternly, saying,

“Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you : and ye have this day rejected your God who Himself saved you out of all your adversities, and your tribulations ; and ye have said unto Him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now, therefore, present yourselves unto the Lord by your tribes and by your thousands.”

And when they presented themselves, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen, and of that tribe Saul son of Kish was taken.

And when Samuel showed the people the tall and stately person whom the Lord had chosen to rule over them, there arose from the whole multitude one great shout of, “ *God save the king.*”

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### LESSON FIFTY-EIGHTH.

## THE STORM IN HARVEST.

SAUL soon won a battle against the Ammonites, which thoroughly established him in his new kingdom.

And after it he was publicly proclaimed king by his people in Gilgal.

On this occasion Samuel called upon all the people openly to declare his uprightness towards them as their judge ; asking them solemnly before God and His anointed king if he had ever oppressed, defrauded, or received bribes.

And they all answered, "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought out of any man's hand."

Then Samuel rehearsed to them the great mercies and miracles wrought for them by God since the time of their coming out of Egypt, and set before them the ungrateful return they had made to all His goodness by asking for a king. Then to show them how grievous their sin was in the sight of the Lord, he called down upon them a great storm of thunder and rain.

It was harvest-time, a season of the year at which rain is utterly unknown in Palestine. In that climate there are two rainy seasons, one at seed-time which we read of in the Bible as "the former rain ;" the other when the blade is sprung up, and needs moisture to enable it to shoot forth to its full height, and which is called "the latter rain."

This wonderful storm caused all the people to fear greatly ; and they said to Samuel, "Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not : for

we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king."

And Samuel answered them, "Fear not, ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart; . . . . for the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way: only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart."

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### *LESSON FIFTY-NINTH.*

#### JONATHAN.

WHEN Saul had reigned two years he set apart a chosen band of three thousand men. Two thousand of these he retained near his own person, whilst he placed the remaining thousand under the direction of his brave son Jonathan.

With this thousand Jonathan smote the hill garrison of the Philistines, near which Saul had received the



outpouring of the Spirit. The Philistines, enraged at such daring on the part of their subdued and despised enemies, gathered themselves together with thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and a great multitude of people.

The men of Israel meantime in their terror hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks. Even those whom Saul himself called together followed him in fear and trembling. Samuel appointed a time to meet the king and his army to sacrifice to the Lord before they set out against the foe. Saul waited for him seven days, and still he came not. Saul began to fear lest this delay should cause all his army to desert him, for his men were dropping off fast; and in his haste and impatience he did that which belonged only to the priests to do: he offered the burnt sacrifice. He had no sooner done so than Samuel arrived, and upbraided him for his irreverent haste, telling him that for it his kingdom should be taken from him, and given to a man after God's own heart.

After this Saul numbered his men. There remained with him but six hundred; and to such a state had the Philistines reduced the people that Saul and his son Jonathan alone possessed sword and spear. They had not even any smiths in the land to whom they might go for arms; for the Philistines had put them down: they were forced to go to their enemies' smiths

to sharpen their commonest implements of agriculture. Still the spirit and courage of Saul and his son were undaunted.

One day Jonathan called his armour-bearer to follow him, and together they made their way, without even the king's knowledge, through the narrow defiles and passes which separated the Israelites from their foes. The Philistines were high in the rocks above them, and Jonathan and his armour-bearer agreed that if they should say, "Tarry till we come to you," they would make no attack upon them; but if on the other hand the Philistines called them up, they would take it as a sign that the Lord had delivered the host of the heathen into the hand of two.

Soon the Philistines perceived them and said, "See, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes and hiding-places where they had hid themselves." Then they cried out mockingly to the two brave Israelites, "Come up, and we will show you a thing."

Here was the sign that they had hoped for, the token that the Lord of hosts was their Helper. Jonathan and his armour-bearer climbed up to them on their hands, and at once slew about twenty men. And the Lord caused a great fear and trembling to come upon the cruel Philistines, and the earth quaked and trembled beneath them, so that in their confusion and terror they turned upon one another, and each man beat

down his fellow. The Hebrew prisoners whom they had with them attacked their captors ; and, to complete the rout, the Israelites hidden in the caves and hollows of Mount Ephraim came forth to the assistance of their gallant leader. And the people took much spoil from their enemies, sheep, oxen, and calves.

This is the account of the first great victory over the Philistines. The struggle with them lasted all through the days of Saul ; but from this time the Israelites seem to have dared to raise their heads and strike for their own liberty.

And when Saul saw any strong or valiant man, he added him to his own band.

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*LESSON SIXTIETH.*

## THE SIN OF SAUL.

At this time Samuel was sent to Saul with a command from the Lord to attack and utterly destroy the Amalekites.

The doom of this sinful Canaanitish people had been pronounced when they laid wait for the Israelites at Rephidim, on their way through the wilderness ; and

now Saul was called upon to carry it out. He was to spare neither man nor woman, neither infant nor child, neither ox nor sheep. They and theirs were to be entirely slain and destroyed.

So the king gathered his people together, two hundred and ten thousand fighting men. And he fought the Amalekites in a valley. But instead of obeying the commandment of the Lord, he spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and also the best of the sheep, and the oxen, and the lambs.

And in the night the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, "It repenteth Me that I have made Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following Me, and hath not performed My commandments."

This casting off of the disobedient Saul so grieved Samuel, that "he cried unto the Lord all night;" but in the morning he arose and came to the king, who greeted him, saying, "Blessed be thou of the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord."

But Samuel answered, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

And Saul, adding cowardice to disobedience, said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed."

Then Samuel told Saul what the Lord had said to him that night : " When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over all Israel ? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites. . . . Wherefore didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord ? . . . Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams ; for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king."

And Saul entreated for forgiveness, but Samuel did but renew the sentence of rejection. At length, in his eagerness to retain the prophet and obtain from him remission of his sentence, Saul seized hold of the skirt of his mantle, and rent it.

Then Samuel said to him, " The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou."

And Saul prayed the prophet to honour him before his people, and join him in prayer to the Most High. So Samuel worshipped the Lord with Saul.

Then Samuel sent for Agag the king of Amalek ; and he hewed him in pieces before the Lord.

And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death : nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul.

*LESSON SIXTY-FIRST.*

## DAVID THE SHEPHERD.

AFTER the rejection of Saul, Samuel was ordered to go to Bethlehem, and there to anoint as future king one of the sons of Jesse, a Bethlehemite.

Samuel appointed a sacrifice to the Lord, and he called Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice. Seven goodly sons did Jesse bring with him, and present to Samuel. And when Samuel beheld the beauty of countenance and the noble stature of Eliab, the eldest, he said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him."

But the Lord said unto Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

In this manner the whole seven were brought by their father; but Samuel said unto Jesse, "The Lord hath not chosen these."

And he said, "Are these all thy children?"

And Jesse answered, "There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold he keepeth the sheep."

Samuel said, "Send and fetch him."

Very fair to behold must have been the youth who

was now brought from beside the sheepfolds to the aged Samuel. Ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon was he. And of him it was said, "Arise and anoint him ; for this is he."

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon the young David from that day forth.

Whilst the Holy Spirit was thus being poured on the happy David, an evil spirit was allowed to trouble the miserable Saul. His attendants urged him to drive away this fearful visitation with music, and Saul consented. So they sought for a skilful musician who might soothe and comfort the king in his evil hour. And they found one, even that same David who, unknown to Saul, had been called from tending his father's sheep to rule the Lord's people in his place.

And David came to Saul, and stood before him ; and the king loved the youth greatly, and made him his armour-bearer. And when the evil spirit was upon Saul, David played with his harp ; and Saul was refreshed and soothed, so that the evil spirit departed from him.

Many a heart since that day has been cheered and gladdened by the sweetly solemn strains of the son of Jesse. They have been the comfort and stay of God's people from that time to this ; and some of them, such

as the 23d Psalm, which we can so well imagine him singing in the midst of his own father's sheep, must have been written even before this time.

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*LESSON SIXTY-SECOND.*

DAVID AND GOLIATH.

AFTER a time David returned to his work amongst his father's sheep. And the Philistines gathered their armies together against the Israelites, and they arrayed themselves in order of battle on a hillside in the territory of Judah. Saul and his men pitched their camp on the opposite hill, so that there lay a valley between the two armies.

There was amongst the Philistines a giant, the descendant of one of those sons of Anak who had fled in the days of Joshua to Gath. He was double the height of an ordinary man, and the weight of his armour and spear was enormous. This immense creature came daily to the front of the armies, defying any one Israelite to fight him, saying that if any man of Israel could overcome him, then all the Philistines would own themselves conquered ; but if, on the con-



trary, he overcame his adversary, the Israelites would serve his people.

And when Saul and his men heard this boastful defiance they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Now the three eldest sons of Jesse were in the camp ; and their father sent his youngest-born, David, from beside the sheep to inquire how his brethren were, and to take them a present. And it so happened that David ran into the camp just as the Philistine giant was shouting his daily defiance. And his soul was filled with horror and indignation that an uncircumcised Philistine should thus defy the armies of the living God. He asked the men about him what reward should be given to the man who should slay the giant.

They answered that the king would enrich him with great riches, would give him his daughter in marriage, and would make his house free in Israel.

Just then arrived David's eldest brother Eliab, who seems to have been envious of his youngest brother ; for he severely reproved him for his pride and naughtiness in coming to the army at all. But David merely repeated his former question.

And his words were told to the king, who sent for him.

Before his royal master David again declared his readiness to go forth and meet the giant ; and when

Saul urged upon him that he was but a boy, utterly unable to compete with this monster, who had been a man of war from his youth, he calmly replied that he had already slain a lion and a bear in defence of his father's flock, and that the God who delivered him from the paw of the lion and of the bear would also deliver him from the hands of this Philistine.

Then Saul said to him, "Go, and the Lord be with thee."

The king then armed the brave youth with his own armour, and girded him with his own sword; but David was unaccustomed to such encumbrances, and put them off him. Instead of sword and spear, he provided himself with five smooth stones from the brook, which he placed in his shepherd's bag. And so he started forth, with naught but his sling and his crook in his hand, but with undaunted trust and confidence in his brave heart.

And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David, his shield-bearer advancing before him. When he beheld the fair, fresh countenance of the stripling who came out to meet him, his soul was filled with anger and wrath. He said, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field."

But David answered, "Thou comest to me with a

spear and with a shield ; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, Whom thou hast defied."

And as the giant came to meet him, David placed one of the stones with which he had provided himself in his sling, and flung it. It struck Goliath on the forehead, and sunk in, so that he fell to the earth on his face. You will remember that David was without a sword, so he ran and stood on the Philistine's body, and drew out his sword from its sheath ; and with it he cut off his head, thus killing him with his own weapon.

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. And the Israelites pursued them shouting, to the very gates of their own city of Ekron.

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*LESSON SIXTY-THIRD.*

JONATHAN AND DAVID.

AFTER David's victory, Abner, Saul's cousin, and the captain, or, as we should call him, general of his host, brought the young conqueror, holding in his hand the head of his slain enemy, to the king. Jonathan,

the brave son of Saul, was with his father when David was ushered in.

And the king said, "Whose son art thou, young man?"

And David answered, "I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

We are told that as those words were spoken, "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and David loved him as his own soul."

And Jonathan made a covenant with David, and he stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with all his garments, even to his sword, and his bow, and his girdle. Strong indeed must have been the force of that youthful love; for it never swerved, even when Jonathan came to know that his friend was the man who was to supplant him in his father's kingdom, and when he was perforce arrayed in battle against him.

And now, from all the cities of Israel came forth the women dancing and singing glad songs of joy, to meet King Saul in his triumph. And they sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

Then the evil spirit of envy and jealousy crept into Saul's heart, and he was very wroth. He said, "They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands; and what can he have more but the kingdom?"

From that day forward Saul hated David. On the morrow the evil spirit seems to have come upon the unhappy king in full force ; and as before David sought to drive it away with his sweet strains. Saul meanwhile held in his hand a dagger or javelin, and he threw it at David, thinking to pin him to the wall with it. David however avoided this danger twice. Then the king feared the youth, for he saw that God was with him ; therefore he made him captain over a thousand men, and promising him his eldest daughter for a wife, he sent him forth against the Philistines. But David was cheated of his bride, who was given to another, and in her stead he was promised her sister Michal, who we are told loved him, on condition that he would slay a hundred Philistines.

The brave son of Jesse led forth his men and slew two hundred, and then returned to claim his wife. And Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that his daughter Michal loved him, so that he gave him his daughter to wife. After the marriage, however, the king's fury returned upon him in double force ; for he not only sought to slay his son-in-law himself, but he commanded Jonathan and all his servants to lay wait for him.

But Jonathan spoke to his father so boldly and firmly of David's bravery and goodness, that at length Saul swore, " As the Lord liveth he shall not be slain."

And he was restored to the king's presence as in times past.

There was war soon after with the Philistines ; and David, who went out to meet them, slew them with a great slaughter. This victory again aroused the king's slumbering jealousy ; the evil spirit returned upon him in full force. As fearlessly as before David came to soothe and comfort his wretched father-in-law, and again Saul rewarded his devotion by flinging his javelin at him. David avoided it once more ; but seeing clearly that the king's palace was no safe home for him, he fled.

Saul sent messengers to watch his house, and to slay him as he came out in the morning ; but Michal warned her husband of his danger, and, letting him down from a window, so that he escaped, she placed a stuffed figure in his bed, so that his flight was not discovered for some time.

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*LESSON SIXTY-FOURTH.*

THE CAVE AT ADULLAM.

DAVID's life was now for some time but one continued flight from the king and father-in-law whom he

had so faithfully served. Saul actually sought to slay his own son Jonathan for conniving at David's absence from a royal feast. It became evident that Jonathan could no longer reconcile his loyalty to his father with his intimacy with David. The friends therefore met once more for a solemn parting, at which they renewed their former covenant of peace and love, and then with many bitter tears they parted.

David fled with his little band of friends to the high-priest, who gave them of the shewbread for food ; and as David was without any weapon of defence, he returned to him the sword which he had taken from Goliath, and which he had presented to the Lord. Then David fled to Achish, the Philistine king of Gath ; for there, at least, he was free from Saul. At Gath, fearing to be recognised as the slayer of their champion Goliath, he feigned madness, and thus secured for himself that consideration which to this day Eastern nations pay to those who are thus affected. He was not however long at Gath ; he soon left it, and took refuge among the limestone hills of his own native Bethlehem, making the great cave of Adullam his chief resort.

Here came to him his brothers and kindred ; the distressed, those who were in debt, and all who were discontented with the existing state of things followed him, and the brave young captain must have

had almost more trouble in restraining his own wild, high-spirited followers, than in escaping from the monarch's wrath.

Once when David was hemmed in on all sides by the Philistines, in the fiercest heat of harvest-time, he longed for a draught of the pure water of the well at the gate of Bethlehem. And he said, "Oh! that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate."

Three valiant men of his own tribe of Judah heard him, and eager to prove their devotion, they broke through the whole Philistine host, drew water from the well, and bore it back in triumph to their beloved chief.

But David would not touch it. The water thus procured at the life-peril of his bravest followers was too sacred for any human lips. He poured it on the ground as a precious offering to his God, saying, "Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?"

About this time, too, one of the priests named Abiathar joined himself to David's valiant little band. He alone had escaped from a general massacre of his kin. Saul had grown more and more bitter over the increasing number of David's followers, and one day he fiercely reproached his Benjaminite kinsmen for



their faithlessness, ending with a wild appeal to their affection, "There is none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day!"

Whereupon an Edomite named Doeg, one of Saul's chief shepherds, who had been present when Ahimelech the priest had given to David and his band of the shewbread to eat, and had delivered to him the sword of Goliath, came forward, and basely revealed the whole transaction to the king. His rage and fury knew no bounds; he hastened to Nob, the priestly city, and ordered his men to slay the priests. They utterly refused to take part in such wickedness, and Saul commanded Doeg to fall upon them. The treacherous Edomite slew eighty-five priests, with their wives and children, in one day.

Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech the high-priest, alone escaped, and, as I have told you, fled to David, who bitterly reproached himself for this sacrilegious massacre, saying that he had occasioned it all, and he solemnly promised to defend Abiathar.

At this time the Philistines attacked and robbed Keilah, a city of Judah. David, by divine command, went down there, and smote them, and saved Keilah and its inhabitants. Saul heard that David was at Keilah, and thinking it would be easy to take him in a walled and fenced town, hurried in pursuit of him.

Abiathar now inquired of the Lord whether David was safe with the inhabitants of Keilah, and was told that they would most assuredly betray him. Wherefore David and his band of six hundred escaped to the wilderness of Ziph, which was beyond Hebron. Here Saul was diverted from the pursuit of his son-in-law by a rumour of a Philistine invasion. He soon however returned to it, and David escaped to Engeddi, on the borders of the Dead Sea, where he and his followers hid themselves in a great cave in the mountains.

Saul, who could not have been aware of David's real whereabouts, came into the same cave to rest, whereupon the fugitives must have crept into one of the side-chambers of the huge cavern. The king lay down and soon slept, as did the guards, whose duty surely should have kept them watchful; and then David's men urged him to slay the bitter foe now so entirely at his mercy. But he indignantly refused, saying, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed."

He stole forth, however, and stealthily cut off a part of the skirt of the king's mantle. Then, retiring to his hiding-place, he allowed him to depart in perfect safety.

When Saul was outside the cave, David followed, crying after him, "My lord the king."

Saul turned, and there stood his brave son-in-law, bowing himself to the earth before him.

Then David showed him the piece of his skirt, revealing to him how entirely he had been in his power, and praying him most earnestly to take his present safety as proof that he would never hurt him in any way.

The sweet tones must have touched the unhappy king ; for he said, " Is this thy voice, my son David ? " And he lifted up his voice and wept.

Then he said, " Thou hast been more righteous than I ; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. . . . And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thy hand : swear therefore by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. "

David took the desired oath. And Saul went home ; but David and his men returned to the fastnesses of the mountains.

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*LESSON SIXTY-FIFTH.*THE DEATHS OF SAMUEL, SAUL, AND  
JONATHAN.

At this time the aged Samuel died ; and all Israel mourned and lamented for him. And they buried him in his own house at Ramah.

After some time, spite of Saul's solemn promise, his jealousy of David returned upon him in full force ; and he again set out in pursuit of him with three hundred men, who were commanded by Abner the captain of the host. And the king pitched his camp in the wilderness of Ziph, where David himself lay hid. One night as Saul was sleeping in the midst of his camp with Abner and all his people around him, David and one of his mighty men, Abishai the brother of Joab, crept within the trench. They saw the sleeping king, his spear driven into the ground beside him, and a cruse of water close to his pillow. They saw, too, that all the guards, even to Abner himself, had fallen asleep at their post.

Then Abishai prayed David to let him strike the enemy who seemed thus, as it were, delivered into his hand. He said, " Let me smite him, I pray thee, with

the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time."

But the good David answered as before, "Destroy him not : for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless ? . . . But," he added, "I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go."

So they took the spear and the water and escaped ; and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked ; for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them.

Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar off ; and he cried to Saul's people, and to Abner, the son of Ner.

Abner answered, "Who art thou that criest to the king ?"

David said, "Art thou not a valiant man ? and who is like to thee in Israel ? . . . As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster."

And Saul heard and knew at once the tones which seemed at all times to exercise so strong an influence over him. He said, "Is this thy voice, my son David ?"

And David answered, "It is my voice, my lord, O

king." And again he pleaded most earnestly with his father-in-law for himself; representing how this merciless pursuit forced him to take refuge with the enemies of the king.

As before, the hard-heartedness of Saul melted away at the sound of the young Psalmist's voice. He said, "I have sinned : return, my son David ; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day. . . . Blessed be thou, my son David."

And Saul returned to his place. David, however, felt certain that there was no dependence on the king's word, and that his life was not safe from him so long as he remained amongst his own people. He therefore again took refuge with Achish, king of Gath, who gave him the town of Ziklag for himself and his men. There he remained for some time, making inroads from it on the Amalekites, and other robber tribes, who were continually vexing the southern coasts of the children of Israel.

Again the Philistines gathered themselves together to attack the Israelites. Saul summoned his men to meet them, but his old courage and bravery were gone from him. When he saw the hosts of the enemy he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

Well, indeed, might he fear ; for the Strength which had formerly led him to victory was taken from him.

In the depths of his anxiety he even had recourse to a witch, a woman of Endor, whom he induced to use her sinful powers on his behalf. She did so in fear and terror, not knowing who he was ; for Saul himself in better and happier days had caused all such people to be punished with death. This wretched woman was even permitted by her incantations to recall the spirit of Samuel to the earth, and Saul questioned him as to his fate. But the prophet's answer did but serve to increase the miserable king's wretchedness, for he predicted utter defeat and discomfiture in the fight that was at hand.

A pitched battle ensued on Mount Gilboa, in which the Israelites fled before the Philistines, and Saul was slain with his brave son Jonathan.

At the time of this defeat, David was absent from Ziklag, pursuing a company of Amalekites, who had made a plundering raid upon his town, burning it, and carrying away the women, amongst whom were David's two wives, captive. He came upon them whilst they were dancing and feasting, revelling in the great spoil which they had taken from the Philistines and Israelites. And he smote them with a great slaughter, and succeeded in recovering the women, and all that belonged to him, and his followers.

Two days after his victorious return to Ziklag, a man came to him, with his clothes rent, and having

ashes on his head, and told him of the defeat of his people, and also of the death of Saul and his son Jonathan.

On being questioned, the man declared himself an Amalekite. He said that he had seen the king leaning upon his spear in the agonies of death, with the chariots and horsemen of the enemy in hot pursuit of him. He said that Saul had begged him to slay him, lest he should fall into the hands of the Philistines; and he, seeing that he could not possibly live, had done so. The Amalekite then presented to David the crown and bracelet which he had taken from the dead king.

David's horror and grief at these tidings were great. He severely rebuked the Amalekite who had dared to slay the Lord's anointed, and caused him to be put to death. His most beautiful of all laments was sung over his father-in-law and his beloved friend—

“The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy places :  
How are the mighty fallen !

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,  
And in their death they were not divided :  
They were swifter than eagles,  
They were stronger than lions.

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle !  
O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thy high places.



I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan :  
 Very pleasant hast thou been unto me :  
 Thy love to me was wonderful,  
 Passing the love of women.  
 How are the mighty fallen,  
 And the weapons of war perished !”

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*LESSON SIXTY-SIXTH.*

DAVID THE KING OF JUDAH AND OF  
 ISRAEL.

By divine direction David now repaired to Hebron, where he was anointed King of Judah. But Abner, faithful to his dead master, made Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, king over the other tribes. For some time the adherents of the two kings fought and strove with each other ; but in the struggle the house of David grew ever stronger, whilst that of Saul waxed weaker.

In one of these encounters, in which the men of Israel were beaten by the servants of David, Abner fled before David's nephew Asahel. This Asahel was the brother of Joab and Abishai. They were the sons of Zeruiah, David's sister. And Asahel was fleet of foot as a wild roe. When the brave Abner saw the

young warrior gaining on him, he begged him to turn aside and put on the armour of one of his followers, lest he should kill him. Asahel however heeded not this wise counsel. He sped on after Abner and caught him, whereupon the gallant old captain struck him with his spear, so that he died.

Some time after this Joab treacherously appointed a meeting with Abner at the gate of Hebron, when he slew him unawares.

David's grief and anger at this foul murder were great. He solemnly laid the guilt of it on the whole house of Joab ; whilst he himself, weeping and fasting, followed the body of Abner to the grave, saying to his servants, " Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel."

This treachery however was but the prelude to one still blacker ; for two of Ish-bosheth's captains, hearing of the death of Abner, and thinking their master's cause lost, determined to seek favour with the more powerful David. They entered Ish-bosheth's house, when he lay asleep in the noon-day heat, slew him in his bed, and cutting off his head, carried it with all speed to David.

We may picture to ourselves the horror of the brave and righteous king at this wicked and cowardly deed. He told the murderers how he had slain the Amalekite who had come to him for a reward for having killed

Saul, adding, "How much more when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house, upon his bed? shall I not now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?"

And David commanded his young men to slay them at once; but he buried his rival's head in Abner's grave.

Then came all the tribes of Israel to Hebron to David, and the elders anointed him king over all Israel. Thus did he attain, by no ways or seeking of his own, but under the guiding hand of the Lord of Hosts, to the kingdom for which Samuel had anointed him when he was yet but a fair and ruddy stripling, tending his father's sheep on the slopes of Bethlehem. Very single had his eye been during all these years of waiting for God's honour and glory, and very small his thought and care for himself. If we turn to his own sweet words in the 23d Psalm, we shall learn what it was that made him, when he was but a mere lad, so happy, contented, and fearless; for how could man or boy fear who trusted in God as his shepherd? And now, in the first flush of his glory and prosperity, we can again see by the 139th Psalm, which is supposed to have been written at this period of his life, how he placed all his confidence in the great Searcher of hearts, in Him to whom his every thought was known; and how earnestly he prayed Him to cleanse him from all wickedness, and to lead him in the way everlasting.

Still, with all his love for God, David had, even at this time, allowed himself foolishly to be led by the example of the heathen kings around him. Like them he had multiplied wives to himself, thus early sowing the seeds of the decay of his house. We are at this time told of six different wives, each having a son of her own, and each of whom must, of course, have been jealous of the others, and anxious to secure the succession to her own child.

David was thirty years old when he was crowned king in Hebron, and seven years after that he became monarch of all Israel. He had a large army, and a chosen band of thirty-seven, who had each distinguished themselves by some special deed of valour, and who formed a sort of body-guard to the king. It was soon after his accession to the kingdom of all Israel, that David made himself master of the stronghold of Zion. The lower part of the city of Jerusalem had been in the hands of Judah since the days of Joshua ; but the fort, or citadel, the Jebusites had hitherto successfully defended. Now however David attacked it at the head of his whole army, promising that whichever of his mighty men first mounted the stronghold, and smote the Jebusites, should be the chief captain of his host. His own nephew, Joab, won this honour, and was thus, from that day forth, at the head of the king's army.

*LESSON SIXTY-SEVENTH.*

## THE ARK RESTORED IN TRIUMPH.

DAVID was now fully established as king of all Israel. Such was his renown as a mighty warrior and a great king, that Hiram, king of the wealthy merchant-city Tyre, sent messengers to him bearing presents of cedar-trees, and masons and carpenters to build him a house.

When the Philistines heard of his greatness, however, they gathered themselves together against him, and by divine command David went out to meet them. Twice he conquered them. The second time their defeat was so utter, that they fled, leaving their idols behind them. These the king and his men burned.

And now that David had come into full possession of the kingdom for which he had been anointed so many years before, and for which he had so patiently and so trustfully tarried, his one earnest desire was to glorify the God of Israel, who had magnified and exalted him. He summoned together thirty thousand of his chosen men, and with them repaired to Kirjath-jearim, to fetch from thence the Ark of the Lord, and to bring it to Jerusalem in solemn triumph. They took it from the house of Abinadab, where it was, and

placing it on a new cart, commenced their journey to Jerusalem ; the king himself, with the elders of the house of Israel, playing before it on many instruments. But Uzzah, one of the sons of Abinadab, seeing one of the oxen stumble, stretched forth his hand to steady the Ark ; and God smote him for his error and presumption, so that he died ; for none but the priests might touch that visible token of the Presence of God.

David feared so greatly at this manifestation, that he did not dare at that time to carry the Ark any farther ; but he left it for three months in the house of a man named Obed-edom. Then returning to Jerusalem, he prepared a tabernacle for it ; and assembling the Levites and sons of Aaron together, he caused them to sanctify themselves, and to prepare fitly and duly to carry home the Ark of the Most High.

This time the sons of the Levites bore it upon their shoulders with staves, according to the appointment of Moses, while the priests and Levites accompanied it with glad songs and dances of triumph, David himself heading the procession, clothed in a robe of fine linen, and dancing and singing before the Lord with all his might. When it had been placed in the tabernacle prepared for it, David offered sacrifices and burnt-offerings. He then blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts, and distributed to all, men and women, bread, meat, and wine.

But it grieved the king that the Ark of God should rest in a tent, whilst he dwelt royally in a ceiled house ; and he sent for the prophet Nathan, and told him how he longed to build for it a temple more befitting the honour of the Most High. But God made known to His faithful servant that he was not to do this thing ; and by the same prophet came the gracious promise that the house of David should abide for ever ; that when the children of David erred the Lord would chastise them, but He would never cast them off as He had done the house of Saul.

After this David smote the Philistines, and the Syrians, taking from the latter shields of gold and much spoil. And on his return he subdued the Edomites, placing garrisons in their cities.

And when the king of Hamath heard of these victories, he sent messengers to bless and salute David, and to present him with large presents of gold, silver, and brass.

And the Lord prospered David withersoever he went. And he executed judgment and justice to all his people. And David ordered that Mephibosheth, the lame son of his dear friend Jonathan, should have restored to him all the land of his grandfather Saul, and that he should eat and drink with himself at his own table.

*LESSON SIXTY-EIGHTH.*

## DAVID'S SIN.

AND now we come to the sad and mournful part of David's life, the great sin which left behind it such bitter sorrow and repentance.

The king of the Ammonites had just died, and David sent comforting messages of condolence to his son ; but the Ammonites shamefully insulted the messengers, so that David sent soldiers under the command of Joab to punish them. Upon this the children of Ammon sent for and obtained the assistance of the Syrians. Joab and his brother Abishai however utterly routed them, when David, hearing that more Syrians were coming to the front, gathered his people together, and came himself to the assistance of Joab. He conquered the Syrians, killing the captain of their host.

The year following David sent Joab with the army to besiege Rabbah, one of the cities of Ammon. He himself, contrary to his wont, tarried behind at Jerusalem. During this time of idleness, as he was one evening walking on the flat-roof of his house, he saw a very fair and beautiful woman. Upon inquiry, he found that her name was Bath-sheba, and that she was



the wife of Uriah, one of his own valiant and privileged guard. I have already told you that David had followed the evil example of the heathen kings around him, in multiplying to himself wives just as pleased him. He now copied their wicked ways still further, for he sent for and took Uriah's wife to himself. Then, not daring to show himself openly to his people as a breaker of the seventh commandment, he added cowardice and murder to his first sin. He sent to Joab, telling him to place Uriah in the front of the battle, where he would surely be slain by the enemy. This wicked command Joab as wickedly obeyed, and when Uriah was dead, he sent messengers to inform David of the fact.

The king seems to have spent this year of his life in the utter deadness to all things good which wilful idleness most surely brings with it; for we are not told that he felt any compunction, even at the success of this dreadful murder. Repentance however was to come—repentance most bitter and sincere. The Lord God sent Nathan the prophet to David. And he came to the king and told him the following parable:—

“There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the, poor man had nothing, save one little ewe-lamb, which he had brought and nourished up; and it grew up together

with him, and with his children : it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was to him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man ; and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him ; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him."

And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man that had so done. And he said to Nathan, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die : and he shall restore the lamb four-fold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Then came the stern answer of the prophet : "Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul. . . . Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight ? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house ; because thou hast despised Me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife."

Then at once, meekly and humbly, David answered, "I have sinned against the Lord."

And Nathan said, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die."

So the Lord struck the child of David and Bath-sheba, so that it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child; and he fasted and prayed, laying prostrate all night upon the earth. After seven days illness the child died, and the servants, who knew how the king had grieved for the babe whilst he yet lived, dared not tell him of his death. But when David saw them whispering, he asked, "Is the child dead?"

And they said, "He is dead."

Then David arose and dressed, and went to the house of the Lord to worship; and on his return he ate.

And as his servants marvelled at his behaviour, he said, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious unto me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

And Bath-sheba had another son, whom David called Solomon; and the Lord loved him.

*LESSON SIXTY-NINTH.*

## THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM.

FROM the time of his great sin, the bright joyousness of David's life seems to have passed from him. Troubles came thick on all sides ; and though his heart could not be cast down, for his trust was in the Lord, still his cares were many and grievous.

He seems to have been too dejected at first to care even to lead his own army ; for we are told that Joab took Rabbah, the city of waters, the royal city of the Ammonites ; and that not until he was summoned thither, lest the people should call it after Joab, did David gather his men together to go forth and conclude the siege. He entirely subdued all the children of Ammon, and was crowned with the gold and jewelled crown of their king.

At this time the evil results of David's numerous marriages were making themselves felt. His eldest son Ammon was murdered by his brother Absalom at a shearing feast, in revenge for a frightful offence committed by the former ; and the king's sorrow must have been piteous to behold, as he lay on the earth weeping, and tearing his garments, mourning the death of one son, and the sinfulness of both.

Absalom, the remaining culprit, fled from his father's face, and remained absent for three years. At the end of that time David was induced by Joab to allow him to return to Jerusalem ; but he would not admit him to his presence.

Absalom was the handsomest man in all the land of Israel. His face and person were said to be faultless in their beauty. His hair especially was a marvel of length and plenteousness. His manners, too, seem to have been peculiarly winning and gracious. But alas ! all these advantages were sadly perverted, and made the means of ill instead of good. He set himself to win the hearts of his father's subjects, and to persuade all the discontented that he would prove a wiser and more vigilant ruler than did his father. At length he craftily obtained leave from David to go to Hebron, saying that he had made a vow to serve the Lord. Once there, he openly and rebelliously declared himself king, taking for adviser Ahithophel, one of David's own priestly counsellors.

When David heard of this fresh wickedness of his beloved son, his heart seemed entirely to fail him. He fled at once from Jerusalem, followed by a great concourse of people, and the priests Zadok and Abiathar bearing the Ark of God. The king, however, would not allow the Ark to leave the city. He sent it back with the priests, telling them to let

him know in his exile how matters went in Jerusalem.

And so David passed forth in humiliation and sorrow from the city that he had won from the Jebusites to be the peculiar delight of the Lord. He went, bareheaded and weeping, over the brook Kidron and up the Mount Olivet. And all the people with him covered their heads, weeping too as they went.

It was here, on Mount Olivet, that the king was told of the perfidy of his own familiar friend and counsellor Ahithophel; and here he sent back the faithful Hushai, the Archite, with orders to insinuate himself into the confidence of Absalom, and to bring the advice of Ahithophel to nought.

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### *LESSON SEVENTIETH.*

## DAVID IN EXILE

ABSALOM and his party now came to Jerusalem, and there they held council as to what should be done. Ahithophel cleverly advised that he should be sent with 20 men in pursuit of David that night; but Hushai, who had been admitted to the council, said that it

would not be wise to attack so mighty a warrior as the king with a small force. He declared it better to collect all the people from Dan to Beersheba, and then fall upon David, and so make sure of him. This advice was followed; for we are told that Hushai was the man appointed by God to bring the clever council of Ahithophel to nought, and to ruin Absalom.

When Ahithophel saw that his words were unheeded, and that David was allowed time to collect himself and gather his men together, he knew that Absalom's cause was lost. He returned to his own house, and hanged himself. Hushai went at once to the priests, told them of all Absalom's plans, and begged them to let David know of them.

David in the meantime had received presents and kind messages from Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan; but from another Benjamite of the House of Saul named Shimei he had received curses and abuse. Abishai wished to kill the man for his insults, but David sadly rebuked him, saying—

“Behold, my son seeketh my life: how much more may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse; it may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.”

So the king and his men went on their way; whilst Shimei, from the hill-side above, cast stones and

down upon him. Hushai's message was brought to David when he was close to the ford of the Jordan. He at once crossed the river with his men, and rested at Mahanaim, where the angels of God had greeted his forefather Jacob after his departure from Charran. Here the royal wanderer again received comfort and sympathy; for a rich Gileadite named Barzillai sent provisions of all sorts, and beds for the king and his men.

David now divided his people into three companies. One he placed under the command of Joab, another under Abishai, and the third under a man named Ittai.

David's intention was to go forth to battle himself; but his people persuaded him not so to risk himself. So with the meekness and submission which had been so apparent ever since the dreadful blow of his son's treachery and rebellion had fallen upon him, he resigned himself to remain behind, stationing himself in the gate as the troops went forth. He gave but one parting command to the three leaders as they set out: it was given in the audience of the whole host, and was most touching in its tone of almost imploring tenderness—

“Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom.”



*LESSON SEVENTY-FIRST.*

## THE DEATH OF ABSALOM.

THE fight of that day was a hard and bloody one. Twenty thousand men of Israel were slain by the servants of David. The struggle took place in a thickly-wooded district, which must have made it hard for the conquered to flee from their foes.

Absalom himself rode on a mule ; and as he passed under the thick branches of a spreading oak, his long, flowing hair caught in the boughs. The mule fled on, and left its master suspended to the oak by the hair of which he had been so proud. One of David's men saw him so hanging ; and he came and told Joab of it. Joab rebuked the man for not slaying him there and then ; but he, horrified, said that nothing should induce him to violate the king's own orders, delivered to the three leaders in the hearing of the whole host.

Joab at once set forth for the spot, with three darts in his hand, which he thrust through Absalom's heart as he hung yet alive from the oak. And they buried him in a great pit in the wood, and laid a heap of stones on him.

When once their leader was gone, the rebellious Israelites quickly dispersed. Two messengers were

meanwhile despatched to the king, who sat anxiously awaiting tidings at the city gate. Soon a watchman announced to him a man running, and almost directly afterwards another. The first drew near. He was the son of Zadok the priest. From a distance he called out, "All is well;" then, coming close, he flung himself at David's feet, saying, "Blessed be the Lord thy God, Which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king."

At once the king asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

The son of Zadok answered that he had seen a great tumult when Joab had despatched him, but he knew not what it meant.

Soon came the second running messenger, of whom David asked the same anxious question.

He answered at once, "The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is."

Thus the king learnt the death of the son whom he so fondly loved. He rose up, and went up to the chamber above the gate, weeping as he went, and crying in bitter grief, "O my son Absalom, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee; O Absalom, my son, my son!"

The victory of that day was turned into mourning for all the people, when they heard of their king's sorrow

for his son ; they stole back to the city stealthily, as men that were ashamed and fled before their foes, instead of as victorious soldiers. And with them came their beloved king, his face covered, and repeating his piteous cry, "O Absalom, O Absalom ! my son, my son !"

He was not, however, permitted even to mourn in peace. When David sought the assistance of Joab in his great sin, he sold himself to a hard and cruel task-master. That tyrant now rebuked him sternly, telling him that it was evident that he would have his whole people dead, if by that means he could have saved Absalom. Joab even dared to use threats to his royal master, declaring that unless he came forth at once and spoke cheering words to his men, worse would happen to him than aught that had yet been.

Then indeed David's kingly nature was aroused. He arose and sat in the gate, and received his people royally. He sent for the priests and his own tribe of Judah to meet him, and lead him over Jordan in triumph. And he deposed the insolent and violent Joab from his place as commander-in-chief of the army, and set Amasa in his stead.

As he returned, the wicked Shimei came out to meet the king, begging forgiveness for the abuse which he had lavished upon him in his tribulation. Abishai longed to slay the vile man as he stood ; but David at

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Israelites, in which four sons of the giant Goliath were slain by David's mighty men. These four were all of great stature, and one of them had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot.

Yet another fearful judgment did David bring upon himself and his people. He gave orders to Joab to number the people from Dan to Beersheba. This numbering, without an adequate cause, was strictly forbidden by the law of Moses, unless at the time of the numbering each man, rich or poor, paid half a shekel, or about ten shillings of our money, to the sanctuary. This money was called a ransom for their souls; and by the payment of it they were intended to learn that they held their life, and all belonging to it, from God only. Even Joab, hardened as he was, tried to prevent this violation of the law. But David persisted in his commands under, we are told, the direct temptation of Satan. So all the tribes, excepting Levi and Benjamin, were numbered. There were eight hundred thousand fighting-men of Israel, and five hundred thousand of Judah.

Swiftly upon the disobedience came the punishment. Gad the prophet was sent to the king to offer him his choice of three evils;—seven years of famine;—three months' flight before his enemies;—or three days of pestilence.

And David chose the pestilence; for he said, "Let

us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man."

For three days the pestilence raged; and during that time seventy thousand of the newly numbered people died. But when the angel of death came nigh to Jerusalem, the Lord stayed him there, saying, "It is enough, stay now thine hand."

The angel was stayed close to the threshing-floor of Araunah, one of the old Jebusite princes who had remained in Jerusalem. And here Gad the prophet was sent to David to tell him to build an altar, and to sacrifice to the Lord on the threshing-floor. As the king and his servants came towards the threshing-floor, Araunah came forth to meet them; and when he knew what David purposed to do, he offered him as a gift, not only the floor, but also the oxen with their harness for the sacrifice. The king, however, would not accept it as a present, but paid for it fifty shekels of silver, the price of a hundred of the lives which he had recklessly sacrificed; for, he said, he would not offer to the Lord his God of that which cost him nothing.

So David built there an altar to the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. And the Lord was intreated for the land. And the plague was stayed in Israel.

The threshing-floor which David had bought was on

particular duty in the Temple for a week, after which they returned to their own homes in the priestly cities, whilst the next in course supplied their places in the Temple.

David also gave to Solomon the pattern on which the Temple was to be built ; its Holy of Holies, its holy place, its courts, its inner and outer chambers, and its porches as they had been revealed to him by God Himself. And then again he repeated the blessing—

“ Be strong and of a good courage, and do it, fear not, nor be dismayed ; for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee ; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the House of the Lord.”

David was now growing very old, and his favourite son Adonijah, jealous, no doubt, of the favour shown to his younger brother Solomon, tried to make himself king. Joab assisted him in this act of rebellion, and so did Abiathar the priest. He even proceeded so far as to make a feast to the chief men of his would-be kingdom.

Upon this Nathan the prophet conferred with Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon ; and on his instructions she presented herself before the king, who was in his chamber, sick and feeble with old age.

She made deep obeisance before him, and reminded



him of his promise that her son should succeed him as king over Israel. Then she told him how, in defiance of that promise, Adonijah had declared himself king, and was even then feasting with his mighty men. Whilst she yet spake, Nathan himself followed her with the same tidings; whereupon David, calling up all his old energy, renewed his promise to Bath-sheba concerning Solomon, and sending for Zadok the priest and Benaiah, he bade them, together with Nathan, place Solomon on the king's own mule, and lead him to Gihon, where they were to anoint him, and proclaim him with trumpets king over Israel and Judah.

This was accordingly done, to the great rejoicing of all the people. Adonijah heard the tumult of joy, and asked its cause. On being told, he fled in terror, and took shelter at the altar of God, whence he would not stir until his brother swore to spare his life.

David after this assembled the whole congregation of his people, and told them of the Temple that Solomon was to build, and how he, David, had prepared for it with all his might, giving brass, marble, silver, gold, and precious stones, in great abundance; and he invited all who were willing to assist him in the good work.

And all the people gave willingly, according to their ability, rejoicing that God gave them the heart so to do; and David their king rejoiced with them, giving glory to their Father, the God of Israel.

Soon after this the "sweet Psalmist of Israel" died, once more charging his son at the very last to be strong, to show himself a man, and to keep the charge of the Lord his God. He also commanded him to show kindness to the house of Barzillai, the Gileadite, who had befriended him in the rebellion of Absalom; also to punish Joab for his two murders of Abner and Amasa; and Shimei for the curses which he had poured upon him when he fled towards Mahanaim.

David had been king forty years: seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three in Jerusalem.

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#### *LESSON SEVENTY-FOURTH.*

### THE REIGN OF SOLOMON.

AFTER the death of his father David, Solomon at once took possession of the throne, and repairing to the brazen altar which was at Gibeon, he offered up a thousand burnt-offerings.

Whilst Solomon was still at Gibeon, there the Lord Himself appeared to him in a dream, and said, "Ask, what I shall give thee."

Solomon at once asked for wisdom and judgment to

rule his father's people wisely and well. He laid before his God the great responsibility that had been cast upon him, and his own youth and inexperience, calling himself a mere child, and praying most earnestly for the understanding and judgment necessary for so mighty a task.

Solomon's request pleased the Lord, and He answered him, "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life ; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies ; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment ; behold, I have done according to thy words : lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour : so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days."

And Solomon awoke ; and, behold, it was a dream.

Again, after this wondrous and strengthening vision, the king offered peace-offerings and burnt-offerings before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord.

Shortly after the heaven-sent wisdom of the young king was fully shown to all Israel. Two women came

to Solomon demanding justice. They both lived in the same house, and they each of them had a little baby boy. The two babies were almost the same age : there was only three days' difference between them.

Now one of these women had lain on her child in the night, and so had smothered him. And when she awoke and found him dead, she arose, and, sheltered by the midnight darkness, she carried him to the other woman's bed, and laid him in her arms, taking from her at the same time her own warm, living child.

The poor mother awoke in the morning to find her boy, as she thought, dead. But when she examined him more closely, she saw at once that it was not her own but her companion's child that lay in her arms. She claimed her own son ; but the other woman wickedly declared that the living child was hers, and that she would not give it up.

So the two women disputed before the king, each claiming the living child for her own, and clamouring for justice.

Solomon said, "Bring me a sword."

And they brought a sword to the king, who ordered that the living child should be cut in two, and half given to one, half to the other woman.

But the mother of the child at once gave up her claim. She said, "O my lord, give her the child, and in no wise slay it."

The other woman, on the contrary, was quite willing that the child should be divided.

But the king ordered that the child should be given to her who would sooner lose all share in him than see him hurt.

And all Israel heard of this wise judgment; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment.

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#### *LESSON SEVENTY-FIFTH.*

### THE TEMPLE OF THE MOST HIGH.

So Solomon found himself firmly established on his father's throne. In his days Israel and Judah dwelt safely, each man under the shadow of his own fig-tree.

The king himself lived in great splendour and magnificence. Twelve officers presided over his household; each of these for one month of the year had to collect from a certain portion of the tribes of Israel the provision necessary for the king and for his great following. We are told that this provision amounted *daily* to ten fatted and twenty grass-fed oxen, a hundred sheep, besides an enormous quantity of venison and

game of all kinds. We can scarcely realise anything so vast as the retinue which necessitated such a supply. It is more than ever marvellous, when we remember the extreme poverty of the Israelites only eighty-three years before, in the early days of Saul's reign, when they had not even the common implements of war.

And now Solomon determined to build the Temple of the Lord, for which his father had already, as we have seen, made provision. To this intent he sent to Hiram of Tyre, who had ever been a friend of David's, telling him his desire, and asking him to supply him with cedar wood from the forest of Lebanon.

Hiram willingly and joyfully promised, not only to furnish him with cedar, but also to send skilled Phœnician workmen to cut it down, and convey it in ships to the port at which Solomon would wish it to be delivered. He also sent artificers in gold and silver, and clever carvers in stone, to assist Solomon in his great and glorious work. On such a scale were these labours carried on, that ten thousand men were employed in the forest of Lebanon alone.

At about this time Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

And now, all things being in readiness, the king commenced building the Temple on the spot which his father David had purchased of Araunah the Jebusite. He commenced it in the fourth year of his

reign, four hundred and eighty years after the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. The stones had all been carved and prepared in the quarries from which they were hewn, so that silently, reverently, and solemnly, without noise of axe or hammer, the beauteous edifice arose and grew into maturity. Wonderfully magnificent and gorgeous must it have been, a fitting declaration to Jew and Gentle alike of the glory and majesty of Him to Whose honour it was raised. The walls were cased in cedar, overlaid with burnished gold; the golden nails employed in the building weighed fifty shekels; and the very floors were covered with pure gold.

The pattern delivered to Moses in the Mount had been closely adhered to. First came the court of the Gentiles; then higher than this that of the children of Israel; then again, on a raised level, the court of the priests, in which stood the altar of sacrifice, the very same which had been made by Bezaleel in the wilderness, and the great laver for the cleansing of the priests, which was a huge brazen basin raised on the backs of twelve oxen of carved brass. Here, too, were placed the smaller lavers for cleansing the sacrifices.

Inside this court was the Temple itself, consisting of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. These must have been one blaze of wrought gold. In the Holy of Holies stood the Ark, veiled beneath the outspread wings of the golden cherubim. All the vessels used in

any way for the service of the Lord were of this most precious metal. There is nothing recorded in all history to approach to the magnificence of the glorious building which the zeal and love of the wisest of men led him to raise to the Lord his God. Seven years was it in building; and when it was completed, the Ark of the Lord was borne by Levites to its place beneath the overshadowing wings, amid the solemnly joyous Psalms of thanksgiving and praise. And when it was set in its place, and the priests had returned to theirs in the court, the glory of the Lord descended on the Temple in a cloud, and so filled it that the priests could not stand to minister in their place.

Then Solomon and the Israelites offered sacrifices to their God : twenty-two thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep; and the king, after blessing his people, knelt in sight of them all, and stretching out his hands unto the Lord, prayed, firstly thanking God for His faithfulness and truth in keeping His promise to His people and to His servant David. Then he prayed that in any trouble that might come upon the Israelites, at home or abroad, or in captivity—troubles sent direct from God, or in punishment for their own sinfulness—if they prayed for relief to the Lord towards this Temple, which Solomon had built unto His Name, that God would hear them from His dwelling-place on high, and forgive them, and have



mercy and compassion on them. Very beautiful and full of faith and trust was the wise king's prayer. You must search it out in the 8th chapter of the first book of Kings, and read it at full length.

And when Solomon had made an end of praying, he again blessed his people, and then concluded with the words used so long ago in the wilderness: "Arise, O Lord, unto Thy resting-place, Thou, and the Ark of Thy strength." And fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offerings and sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord so filled the house that the priests could not enter into it. And the people fell on their faces and worshipped the Lord, saying, "He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever."

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### *LESSON SEVENTY-SIXTH.*

#### SUMMARY.

Now let us try and glance backward at what we have been learning concerning the Church of God in days long gone by; for we must always remember that the Church of God on earth commenced with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and will only reach its full development when the redeemed of all nations

and tongues shall stand face to face with their Lord in Heaven.

We have seen, firstly, how God, after making His creatures perfectly good and happy, most mercifully took them into covenant with Himself; the promise being on His part eternal life and happiness, and on theirs obedience. We have seen, too, how they listened to the voice of the tempter, and allowed their will to set itself at variance with God's will. Their disobedience led to care, pain, toil, and death; and brought into the world all the discord and divisions which have since torn and rent asunder the human race. But even in the first bitter hour of their punishment, even as they were forbidden to rest in their lovely Eden, came to cheer them the bright promise of the woman's Seed. And from that day forth we have seen the promise repeated more and more clearly.

In the second covenant with Noah, that of mercy, Shem was chosen to inherit it, and Japhet to share it with him.

In the third covenant with Abraham, the promise becomes far more clear. All nations of the earth were to be blessed in the glorious One.

From faithful Abraham we have followed the sweet histories of Isaac and Jacob; and having watched Jacob's seed grow mighty in the land of Ham, we have learnt how Moses, "the friend of the Lord," led

them forth with a mighty hand and outstretched arm, through the waters of the Red Sea, across the desert, into that land that had been four hundred years before given to their forefather Abraham. Wonderful types are these of our own restless wanderings in the wilderness of this life, which we commence with the waters of baptism, and which, if we journey aright, will lead us to a far better, a heavenly country. In the history of these children of Abraham, too, we have seen the clearest foreshadowings of the promised Seed—the Paschal Lamb whose blood preserved from the angel of death—the serpent raised on the tree, at which a mere glance from the eyes of faith brought salvation.

Into the goodliest of all lands we have traced the steps of these children of Jacob, ruled by their God Himself through judges; and there, too, we have seen them grow discontented with the tender and Almighty Hand that was over them, and ask for an earthly king like the heathen nations around them.

We have seen how their first king was rejected because of his disobedience, and how the young shepherd boy, whose loving spirit was after God's own heart, was chosen in his stead. We have followed this young shepherd through the wandering life of his early days to the time when he was brought to great honour and might, and his kingdom established in the land. Many and most clear were the promises vouch-

safed to him of the Seed, who was even called from him, "the Son of David."

And, lastly, we have seen the Temple built by David's son Solomon. There we must for the present leave the history of God's Church. Some day we may resume it, and trace it through times far different from the happy, prosperous, and peaceful ones in which we now leave it.

Meantime, whilst the Bible has given us this history for our profit and instruction, it has given us with it the great book of prayer and praise, the Book of Psalms, which teaches us to apply its lessons to our own hearts and lives. Some of these Psalms were written in very early times. The sad 88th was written by an Israelite, named Heman, in the bondage of Egypt, and most piteous is its plaint and cry for help. The 90th and 91st were by Moses in the wilderness. The 113th is Hannah's thanksgiving after the birth of Samuel. But the greater part of the book was written by the "Sweet Psalmist of Israel." Indeed, as you know, our own Common Prayer-book calls them all collectively, "The Psalms of David." The whole inner and devotional life of the "man after God's own heart" is set forth in these hymns. His thankfulness and love to the God who so filled his cup with joy, even as a shepherd boy, that it overflowed, in the sweet 23d. His awe and delight in the glory of that God in the

8th, 19th, and 29th. All these would seem to have been written ere he had yet appeared at the court of Saul, whilst he lay tending his father's sheep on the hills of Bethlehem. His thanksgiving after the victory over Goliath is given us in the 144th; his bitter sorrow at the massacre of the priests who had befriended him when he fled from Saul in the 120th; his trust and confidence in God through all the cruel pursuit of his father-in-law are beautifully set forth in the 34th, where he instructs his wild followers in the cave of Adullam how to live in the fear of the Lord. Then come his songs of joy and triumph at the first finding of the Ark. The 68th, which opens with the old chaunt sung in the wilderness, when the Ark was taken from its resting-place and borne forward at the head of the host, is the very same which David and his minstrels sang as they danced in solemn triumph when the same Ark was brought into Jerusalem. It is now our Whitsunday hymn of joy.

Thus, even the great sin of David's life has been turned by our merciful God to our lasting and enduring benefit; for where, as in the 51st and 32d Psalms, can we find voice for the deep penitence and contrition which should be ours after sin? And after using them humbly and truly, we are led on to the chastened quiet and peace of the 4th.

But though so many of the Psalms were written by

David, they do not end with him. They were carried on by the priestly band of musicians which he had organised for the Temple service. The 72d, the 127th, perhaps the 45th, were written by Solomon. The last of these three was sung by the Levites at his marriage.

In this short account I have not spoken to you of the prophetical Psalms—those which describe the very life of the promised Seed so vividly and minutely that they might well be called gospels. Scarcely one of these hymns but allude in some way to Him, Who was the hope of all Israel, and Who must have been remembered or alluded to in almost every prayer of the saints of old, though they foresaw His coming but dimly.

THE END.

